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A N
E S S A Y
CONCERNING
Preaching:

Written for the Direction
O F
A Young DIVINE.

By *Jos. Glanvil*, Chaplain to King
Charles II. and Fellow of the
Royal Society.

The Second Edition.

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ESSAY

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Preaching:

By John Wesley

OF

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TO
Mr. Charles Fountain.

SIR,

YOur modesty in desiring some Direction in the great business you are about to undertake is very just, and well grounded: I wish I had as much reason to commend your judgment in the choise of a Director. There is nothing of greater moment than the work of a Preacher; and the due performance is proportionably difficult: And yet there is scarce any thing on which Men run more rashly, and more easily persuade themselves they can judge of: Hence

it is that not only the Persons, who are design'd for that Office, in their young and unripe Years, but even the vulgar of all sorts, undertake to be Judges here: by reason of which immodesty, the former so oft miscarry when they address themselves to the Work, and the latter lose much of the benefit of Sermons, in the vanity of their ignorant and bold censures. Of this I perceive by your Letter you have a just Sense, and therefore for your satisfaction, I have drawn together my thoughts, and observations, which I have set down familiarly, and plainly in the following Papers. I design'd no elaborate Discourse, nor Collections out of Books; but give you the results of my private considerations. Some learned Men, I know, have written on the
subject

subject (tho' not so many as one would think should on an Argument of such importance) But I purposely kept myself from reading any others, that I might freely, without bias, give you mine own apprehensions; which, as I interpret, was your desire to me. Since the Papers were written and transcribed, I have looked over two or three of the chief of those Discourses; and am exceedingly encouraged by finding, that my conceptions, as to the main, are not only consistent, but very agreeable with theirs. I could have exemplified all the ways of bad Preaching I have caution'd against, in many, who have yet been applauded for their follies; but I design not to reflect upon Persons; 'tis sufficient that I mark the Errors of Practice.

THE difference, and contrariety of Men's Judgments and Opinions, is long since grown into a common saying, and become matter of every ones observation: But among all the subjects of various thoughts, there is scarce a greater diversity, than in the judgments Men make of *Preaching*; of which, besides the variety of Phancies, and the several degrees of understanding, this is a principal cause, *viz.* That Men judge of Sermons by very *different measures*; and every one expects that the Preacher should conform to *his* particular Rule of judging. Some would have them to be polite, and

and ingenious Discourses, to gratify and entertain the Audience: so that if the words be not chosen, and the periods even, and the matter witty, and diverting, the Sermon is condemn'd for a flat, and dull Homily; and which is harder yet, if it do not chance to hit on that sort of wit, and eloquence, with which the Hearer is taken; it shall undergo the Censure, though it be, in another way, very eloquent, and ingenious. But then, Stiles and fine sayings, are of little account with another sort of Judges; They still expect to be taught some new thing that they never heard before; They are for notions, and learned observations; and where these are

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wanting, every thing else is dry, and unrelishing: A third would have Quotations, and Sentences out of Fathers and Philosophers; so that the Sermon is nothing worth in their judgment, that is not fill'd with Names of Authors, and abundance of Greek and Latin: Others again are by no means for the Citations of *these* kinds, but delight in numerous Texts of Scripture (Chapter, and Verse) quoted roundly, and fluently, upon every occasion, or without any, in season and out of season: *Such* a Preacher proves all he saith, (though there be not one word alledg'd to purpose) He shall have their Company, and is the only Man that deserves the Honour

nour of their applauses: Some are for the taking Phrases, and passionate out cries; for loudness and vehemence, for action and imitation, and this, with them, is *powerful* Preaching, and *these* the *pretious* Men: whereas others will scarce allow of any thing that pretends to move a passion; The Preacher must speak in one key, and tenour of voice, and stand as unmoveable as a Statue: He must speak as if he said a Lesson, and his Sermon were an exercise to be repeated before his Masters. I could recite many more instances of the different measures by which Men judge in this matter; But these are enough for my present purpose.

Now

Now while the Rules of judging are so numerous, and so opposite, the opinions of Sermons must needs be equally different: and there would be no great hurt in this diversity, if Men would be modest in their Censures; if they would not despise, and vilifie not only the Persons, whose way they do not like, but even the Doctrines, and Rules of Life that are not deliver'd after their peculiar fashion: But since these are too commonly the effects of it, this variety is a great unhappiness, an occasion of many separations, and a great hindrance to edification, and the progress of the Gospel.

So that it would be a Felicity,

licity, not only to the Clergy, but even to the People, that are to be instructed by them; were Men brought to judge by one, and the right measure: For then the Preachers would not have the temptation of complying with the phancies of their hearers; Nor these the occasion of quarrelling their Teachers, and vilifying their Doctrine, because it is not dress'd up according to their capricious humors, and uncertain imaginations.

Now the Rule whereby the People are to judge, ought also to be the measure by which the Divine should Preach; and the measure no doubt ought to be taken from the *End*: This one thing

thing considered, would reduce the Rules of Preaching to a narrower compass: and if Men would but ask themselves the question, *What is the End of Sermons*; they would easily see the folly and extravagance of many of their measures.

The *End* of Preaching must be acknowledg'd to be the *Instruction* of the hearers in *Faith* and *Good Life*, in order to the *Glory* of God, and their present, and future happiness; and this ought to be the *Rule* and *Measure* of Preaching, and the exercise judg'd by this. When it is proper for the promoting these ends, it is good Preaching; when it is not so aim'd, though the Discourse be never
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concerning Preaching. II

so Elaborate, Witty, Eloquent, or Learned, it is not *Preaching*: It may have its proper commendation as a Speech, but ought not to be reckon'd as a good Sermon.

Having thus briefly settled the general measure, I shall give you the main *Rules of Preaching*; and then point out the most notorious faults of Sermons, that are transgressions of them: I shall describe also what I take to be the fit and decent circumstances: and by what industries the faculty may be obtain'd.

I shall handle the *Rules of Preaching* under these four Heads. It ought to be Plain, Practical, Methodical, Affectuate.

I. Plainness.

1. **P**lainness is a Character of great latitude, and stands in opposition, First to *hard words*. Secondly, to *deep and mysterious notions*. Thirdly, to *affected Rhetorickations*, and Fourthly, to *Phantastical Phrases*.

1. The Preacher should use *plain words*: to the end, *Edification*, requires. He that affects hard ones, speaks in an unknown tongue, and is a *Barbarian* to his Auditors; they hear the sound, but are not edified: of all the vanities of Speech, there is none more contemptible than this: and none is more exploded among the Wise; not only in Preaching, but in all matters of solemn Discourse, and ordinary

ordinary conversation. It is commonly the Error of the Youth; and may be pardon'd to such, in Moral, and Philosophical subjects: but in Men, set apart to instruct the People in things of spiritual, and eternal concernment, 'tis not to be indured. If you here ask me, *What I mean by hard words?* I will presume that you cannot think I intend to condemn all that are borrow'd from the *Greek, Latin,* or other more modern Languages: No, the *English* is a mixt Speech, made up of divers Tongues, and we cannot speak without using forreign words: So that those that talk of *pure English*, if they mean *unmixt*, by it, Dream of Chimæra's: our
Language

Language hath in all Ages been enlarging by the Introduction of borrow'd Words, which when they are once brought into common use, they may be spoken without blame of affectation: yea there is sometimes Vanity, and Affectation in avoiding them: You know a great instance of this in a late Writer, who to shun the Latinisms of *immensity, eternity, penetrability, &c.* useth these, *all-placeness, all-timeness, thorow-fareness*, and abundance such like. This *English* is far more unintelligible, than that *Latin*, which custom of Speech hath made easie, and familiar. I therefore blame not all forreign Words, provided common usage hath made them free

free of our Language: and when we have not native ones that do as well expresse what we would say: but to affect outlandish words that have not yet receiv'd the publick stamp, and especially to do it, when the ordinary *English* will represent the thing as well; These are the hard words I condemn, and this is a vanity I think extremely reprehensible in a Preacher. Besides which, I note by way of further limitation, and for more clearness, that I blame not all words that are not understood by the meer vulgar: every Art, every Profession, every Subject hath proper terms, which are of hard, and harsh sound to those that understand not

not those matters respectively ; but are easie, and familiar to such as know them. And in Divinity there are frequent occasions of using reasons, and illustrations taken from the Philosophy, and nature of things ; as particularly in the discourses concerning the *Being*, and *Attributes* of God, the *Immortality* of the *Soul*, and a future Life ; about *Enthusiasm*, and *Fanatical* pretences to the *Spirit* : These, and divers other main subjects of Religion, that are fit, and necessary to be spoken to, sometimes, especially among hearers of more advanced understandings, cannot be treated of without using words which the meer common sort cannot
compre-

comprehend: and yet as long
as they are such, as are known,
and frequently used, in those
subjects, 'twere humour and
ignorance to interdict them.
But then, I would caution here,
that the Preacher should not
employ more terms of art than
need: Yea he should always a-
void them, when they are not
necessary; that is, when more
generally known expressions
will explain the thing as well.
And this further I would advise,
that you deal not much on such
arguments among common
hearers: these are strong Meat,
babes must have Milk, and sim-
pler diet.

To this head of hard Words,
may refer another vanity,
which

which is an affected use of scraps of *Greek* and *Latin*, things of no Service to the vulgar, by whom they are not understood; and by the wise they are now generally despised. I suppose need not caution you, in more words, against this antiquated pedantry, which is worn out every where, except in some remote, and dark corners, where mean spirits seek the admiration of the Ignorant, by such low and little devices. Indeed in solemn assemblies of knowing and learn'd Men, the Authority of the Ancients may properly be cited in their own words, when they serve to confirm or illustrate some doubted truth; but to do it frequently in common

and

and vulgar matters, among ordinary hearers, is affected folly, that signifieth nothing, but the weakness, and vanity of him that doth it.

2. Preaching should be plain, in opposition to *deep* and *mysterious notions*: We should not trouble our Pulpits with Hypotheses of Philosophy or the heights of speculative Theology. The generality are not capable of much Theory: those are matters fit for the Schools of learning, and the thoughts of deep considering Men. Much mischief is faine on Religion by reason of the transgression of this Rule: mysterious, notionable Preaching hath put many conceited People upon meddling with

with what they can never well understand, and so hath fill'd them with Air, and Vanity, and made them proud, phantastical, and troublesome; disobedient to their Governours, and contemptuous to their betters. True Knowledge indeed humbleth, but the conceited Image of it, Knowledge *falsly so call'd*, puffeth up, and is an instrument of mischief.

2. *Plainness* may be opposed to *affected Rhetorick*, and in this Sense too, Preaching should be plain: *Not in the enticing Words of Man's Wisdom, or excellency of Speech* (as the Apostle speaks) *viz.* not like the Orators, and Rhetoricians of those times, who coveted the glory of being accounted

accounted eloquent; and when they were praised, they had their reward: but our ends are far greater, and nobler, and so we should speak *not as pleasing Men, but God*; with that seriousness and gravity as becomes those that design to *persuade Men*, in the matters that relate to the glory of God, and their own present, and future well being: For which purposes a manly unaffectedness, and simplicity of Speech is most proper. There is a bastard kind of Eloquence that is crept into the Pulpit, which consists in affectations of wit and finery, flourishes, metaphors, and cadencies: This may be pardon'd to young Men, in their first Essays

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of Preaching, but is by no means to be used by an exercised and constant Preacher: for the meer common sort heed not those things, and the wise despise them; so that all the praise that is aim'd at is lost, except it be among some phantastical, and unjudicious Hearers; and on those, they have usually no other effect but that they entertain and tickle their phancies for the present, without making any impression upon their minds, or affections: And this is a very low End for a Minister of God, who is to *beseech men in Christ's stead*. If we would acquit our selves as such, we must not debase our great, and important message by those vanities

ties of conceited speech; plainness
is for ever the best Eloquence,
and 'tis the most forcible: so
that our study should be to re-
present what we have to deliver
in proper and easie Expressions;
neglecting and despising all
starchedness of set, and affected
speaking.

4. *Plainness* of preaching im-
plies also the avoiding of *phan-
astical Phrases*. There are some
that place the power, and
spirituality of Preaching in
these; and reckon that there
is something of extraordinary
grace, and force in them: So
that if a Man represents the
truths of the Gospel in simplicity
and plainness, that shall go for
null morality; but the same

things set off by conceited, fashionable Phrases shall be most rare, and spiritual Divinity. Thus if you teach Men to believe *Christ's* Doctrines, to obey his Laws, to trust to his promises, and to conform to his Example; these shall be counted dull, dry, and unedifying things, that no ways affect, or move: But if you tell the People that they must roll upon *Christ*, close with *Christ*, get into *Christ*, get a saving Interest in the Lord *Christ*: O this is savoury, this is precious, this is spiritual teaching indeed: whereas if any thing more be meant by those Phrases, than what the other plain Expressions intend, it is either falshood or

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non sense. If therefore you would be a taking popular Preacher, here is your way: But if you would (as I hope you design) be a solid and honest one, you must avoid such odd, and foolish affectations. For by the use, and delight in such, ignorant People are blown up into an apprehension of their extraordinary knowledge, and acquaintedness with the Mysteries of the Gospel, when as indeed they know nothing; and when they hear such Phrases, they are pleased with their sound, but have no meaning or knowledge of any thing conveyed by them, and though this be vulgarly accounted plain Preaching; yet in truth it is

the most difficult; and for the most part neither Teachers, nor Hearers understand it.

Thus I have described to you the first Rule, and Character of Preaching, it should be plain.

2. **I**T should be practical.

The main business of Religion is a good and holy Life; and our main design should be to promote that; This is to be endeavour'd by *Pious Doctrines, Practicable Directions, and Forcible Motives.*

1. *Doctrines* and *Practice* are not opposite but subordinate. Action requires some knowledge; the Soul without it is not good. The foundation for good life must be laid in those Principles

ciples, that promote, direct and encourage it, which the People must be frequently and plainly taught: The Doctrines that are speculative and nice should be let alone; but those that guide, and encourage us in virtue and goodness, must be often explain'd and enforc'd. And the Preacher should choose such for Subjects, as are most suitable to the Exigencies of the Age, and Place in which he lives. Now the Doctrines I think most seasonable and proper for this, are such as these; (1.) Explications and vindications of the *Attributes* of God, especially of his *Goodness*. For nothing so much governs Mens Thoughts, and Practices in Religion, as the

conceptions they have of the Divine Nature and Attributes: If they look on God as a rigid severe Being, that acts altogether by meer Power and arbitrary Will, their Religion likely, will consist in forced, heartless Observances, which are properly Superstition; but if they conceive Him as infinitely kind and gracious, acting by the principle, and for the ends of benignity, and goodness, this produceth holy Love, and delight in God, which begets the most sincere, and kindly devotion. Therefore 'tis very fit and necessary for us to endeavour to implant right conceptions of God, in the minds of men, and to deliver them from those

those Doctrines that have misrepresented him in the World, to the Eclipse of his Glory, and the great Prejudice of Souls.

(2.) 'Tis very proper and reasonable for the Age to represent the *Reasonableness* of Religion, both in the principles and duties of it; that Men may know upon what grounds they stand, and not hold their faith by meer Custom, and the Tradition of their Fathers: That they may be able to give an account of it to those that ask them: That they may be the better fastned in it, and not be blown up and down by every wind of Doctrine: That they may be inabled to defend their Faith against gain-sayers, and to secure themselves

from the pretences and temptations of seducing Spirits. (3)

The *necessity* of an *holy Life* is a most proper Subject for all times, and particularly for these, in which the *Antinomians*, and *Solifidians* on the one side, and the *Romanists* on the other, have prevail'd so far as to have it esteem'd in a manner needless: For the *first* place all the interest of Religion in an empty, notional Faith, prescinding from good Works, and real inward Righteousness: And the *others* have such salvo's and grounds of Security for evil Men by means of Indulgences, Penances, Purgatory, and the like, that the absolute necessity of thorow Repentance, and Reformation
of

of life is much weakned, if not quite taken away by them. So that 'tis extreamly needful for us to endeavour to secure our People against the dangerous errors of both sorts: and to fix them upon the necessity of living well, in order to the obtaining the Favour of God, and the Salvation of their Souls: for if any thing else will render them accepted of him and make their Condition safe in the other World, all our exhortations to Holiness, and good Life, will be to little purpose. (4.) *Catholick, Universal Charity* is a Doctrine exceedingly fit for these Times, in which divisions, and mutual animosities have produced so many fatal, and deplorable effects

effects. Peace and Love should be some of the Objects of our chief Care, Study, and Indea-
vours, knowing that no Reli-
gion can thrive without them;
we should seek the peaceable
principles, and walk in the cha-
ritable ways: teaching and pres-
sing both upon our People, in
the full latitude, and extent of
them: And though the doing
this will displease, and provoke
the Bigots, and Boutefeu's of all
sides, yet we must go on, arm'd
with the courage, and patience
of the Gospel, and tell dividers
their duty, and their sins, whe-
ther they will hear, or whether
they will forbear: And be in-
stant in preaching of Peace, and
Love, though we are torn in
pieces

pieces for it. I do but just hint these things; and 'tis not proper to do more in this Place. They are principal heads fit to be made some of the chief hinges of your discourses, and scope of your Endeavours.

2. Your Doctrines must be attended with *Rules of Life*: For if you teach nothing but doctrinal Matters, though they are never so important, all will end in notion, and speculation; the directing men to the knowledge of their duties, and the way to perform them, as they ought, is one of the greatest parts of our Work. In doing which, you must take care, that you make not more sins, and duties than God hath made: That you press
them

them not upon things that have no warrant from Scripture, Reason, the injunction of our Superiors, or practice of the first Christians: That you require not small Matters with the same Zeal, and Concernment, that you do the greatest, and most indispensable Virtues: That you urge not Men to unattainable heights, or things beyond the size of humane Nature, in this low Condition: but preach the main, known, acknowledged Duties; and such, as are suited to the plain Precepts of the Gospel, and the Condition, and Possibilities of human Life; to the performance of which you should direct by the few, proper, practicable Rules;

Rules ; not confounding your Hearers by multitudes , which do but puzzle, and discourage ; but advise such as are most fit, and most direct ; such, as are not only to be talked of, but may be practised, and brought into action. And these Duties, and these Rules you should enforce.

3. By the most *powerful Motives*, taken from the reasonableness, and necessity of them : from hope and fear, the considerations of the present World, and of the next : convincing Mens understandings that their Interest is in their Duty, and by this way endeavouring to influence their resolutions, and their practice, such is the practical

cal preaching I advise. The next general Rule is,

3. **P**reaching should be *Methodical*. Method is necessary both for the understandings, and memories of the Hearers; when a Discourse hath an order, and connexion, one part gives light to another; whereas the Mind is lost in Confusions. And how helpful Method is to the Memory, is obvious to every one to conceive. Now for the advising the particular Method, I must say, that no one is always best, but it must be varied as the Subject is: For general Rules you may govern your self by these.

1. You

1. You should take care your method be natural, not strain'd and forced, but such as the matter, and the Capacities, and wants of the Auditors, require, and lead you to. 2. It should be obvious, and plainly laid down: If the method be dark and hidden, it loseth its end, and neither helps the Understanding, nor the Memory. What some say here, that it should be Cryptick to surprise the Auditors, seems to me very vain, and weak; for our business is not to surprise, but to instruct; not to take the phancy with the unexpectedness, and strangeness of what we say; but to enlighten the mind, and to engage, and encourage the Practice,

hidden

ctice, by the clearness, and suitability of our Preaching, and for this I am sure, an open, and known Method is best; for when 'tis such, the hearers know where we are, and their thoughts can go along with us; whereas in the other way, they lose us quickly, and our words die in their Ears without effect, or lasting impression. 3. I advise that it abound not with too many Particulars; the main things to be said may be reduced to a small number of Heads, which being thorowly spoken to, will signifie more than a multitude slightly touch'd. And when the Matter is spun out into many Particulars, usually they are coincident, being only dif-

different words for the same thing, and so they discover the little Judgment of the Speaker, and confound the Memories of the Hearers. These Rules I think you may do well to observe. But I shall be a little more particular ; and consider in Method. First, The choice of the *Text*. Secondly, The *Preface*. Thirdly, The *Body* of the Sermon. And Fourthly, The *Application*.

I. In chusing your *Text* you should take care that you discover not any conceitedness, or lightness of phancy ; for that is one way of abusing the Word of God ; which should never be play'd, or trifled with ; but always mention'd with seriousness,

ness, and gravity, especially upon all occasions of solemn discourse from it. 2. You should avoid the ordinary choise of abstruse, difficult, and mysterious Scriptures, which some affect on purpose to ostentate their Skill and Learning, and more than ordinary Spirituality of Knowledge. There is no Subject fit for a Sermon, but there are plain Places that will afford occasion to treat of it: And the Consequence from thence is most easie and most forcible. 3. For the same reason you should not affect very barren Texts: There is also vanity in this, for Men think by so doing, to raise the reputation of their Wit, and Invention, in finding out

out profitable matter, in such Places, as seem'd to have little or nothing in them: When as to the wise they shew nothing but their conceitedness, and affectation; and put a force upon the Words, extorting that from them, which they never intended; which also is a kind of fooling with, and abuse of Scripture.

2. For the *Preface* of your Sermon. First, the Introduction should not be remote, or far fetcht, but such as shews the necessity, or seasonableness of the Subject you have chosen; or something that leads to the understanding of it. 2. The scope, occasion, and coherence of the Words should be laid down plainly and

and in few words : long coherences from Chapter to Chapter, and Verse to Verse, are most commonly arbitrary, and *made* by him that *finds* them ; and always tedious, and of little advantage to the Hearers. Thirdly, The Explication should be short, giving the sense without phrases, and terms of Art : Nice and elaborate Criticisms ; and Expositions are for the most part unprofitable ; and they are lost upon common Auditors. More vain are the recitals of the different Opinions of Expositors, and Commentators among such, and when they hear that learned Men are of so many, and of such disagreeing Judgments about the sense of every Scripture,

pture, they are apt to conclude, either that Learning is vain, or what is worse, that Religion is uncertain. So that the representation of such diversity tends to the dissettlement of the People; and it begets in some a despair of understanding any thing of the Bible, which commonly ends in Scepticism, or Popery. Besides which, you may consider whether it hath not the appearance of some Insolence and Vanity in the Preacher, to tell the People that such and such great, and celebrated Men understood the words in this sense, and in that; and then to add, *But my Opinion is thus*; which must stand as the decisive Judgment.

3. The *main Discourse* you may handle either by dividing the Text into its substantial *Parts*; or by resolving them into one, or more main *Propositions*. In the first, you must take care that your divisions be not numerous, minute, and nice, remembering that *Divisionum minutiis rerum franguntur pondera*: Of all the Vanities in Preaching there is none less accountable than this, of dividing Texts into indivisibles; and mincing them into single words; which makes them signifie nothing: This is a trick by which Men wander whither they will, forsake the sense of their Texts, and run usually into contemptible Impertinencies, and Childishness of trifling. Divisions

visions also that are very curious, and scholastical are to be avoided, as things not intended by the inspired Writers, (who spoke with plainness, and simplicity;) nor any ways promoting the Edification of the hearers. But your divisions should be into solid and main parts, obvious in the Text, and apt to yield occasion for serious, and substantial Discourse. Secondly, when you handle your Text by way of **P**roposition or **D**octrine, care must be taken that what you infer for a subject, be naturally contain'd in the words, and not violently enforced upon them: and the Propositions you undertake should be few; one ordinarily

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is enough, two or three sometimes - may be allow'd, but more scarce to be indured, in a single Sermon, wherein time will not give leave to do any tolerable right to them. Thirdly, the next thing to be done is to state the notion of the truth, or duty you speak of. This is exceeding necessary in order to the forming clear, and distinct conceptions in the minds of the hearers; for so much any Man knows, as he distinctly understands, and no more: and this is generally much wanted, for Men have but confused imaginations about the Doctrines, and Duties of Religion, like the sight of him that saw Men walking like Trees;

Trees; their Thoughts about these, are like their Dreams, having nothing in them distinct, or clear. Hence it is that they understand so little of Religion, and reason so foolishly, and injudiciously about it. It is therefore needful to state the Doctrine, or Duty we speak of clearly, and distinctly, bringing it the nearest way to the understanding, without ambages, and terms of Art, and impertinent distinctions; Truth may be taught plainly without these, by any one that understands it well himself. Fourthly, your Proofs are ordinarily, from *Scripture* and *Reason*; First, Proofs from *Scripture* in things generally acknowledg'd, are needless; C 2 especially

especially when the Bible is every where full of the truth we assert, and the Text contains it in so many words ; to labour in this kind of proof is proving one Scripture by another, and doing little to purpose. When the matter is not so clear, or so confest, this sort of proof is seasonable, and needful, but then we should not do it only by numbers, but by weight of Texts. Few places that are strong, and to the matter import more than never so many that are not pertinent. Therefore you should not prove by your Concordance but by your Understanding and Judgment; not by the sound of words, but by the Sense of things. And you are

concerning **P**reaching. 51

are to look upon it as an abuse of Scripture, to heap Texts to no purpose. 2. Your Proofs from *Reason* should be from acknowledg'd Principles of Mankind, not from Presumptions, or customary Belief, or the doubtful Opinions of this, or that Philosopher. Those we may use in evincing the most known Truths and Duties of Christianity, both to confirm our selves and others in the reasonableness of our Religion, and to convince those Gain-sayers that have worn off all reverence for the sacred Writings.

4. In *Applications* there are two extreams, viz. tedious Prelixity, and too much Conciseness, and Brevity; in the former

mer Error are those, who run their Applications into numerous, coincident Uses, as of *Information, Confutation, Instruction, Reproof, Exhortation, Dehortation, Comfort, Direction* and the like; all which, are reducible to *Inference, Advice* and *Motives*. The *Inference* contains the general Truths that arise from the Discourse: the *Advice*, those Exhortations, and Directions that concern the Practice: and the *Motives* afford those considerations whereby the duties are enforced, and our indeavours are encouraged and excited.

You may insist more or less on these, as the subject may require, only take care, you do not tire the Auditors by bringing

ing in all things, that are any way reducible to these uses, but insist on such as are most proper, and immediate.

The other extream to be avoided, is too much Brevity in the Application, which being the directing and enforcing part, the life of a Sermon lies here. So that the hudling up of this most material part in a few cold words, betrays as much want of Zeal, as extream tediousness doth of Judgment.

THE *Fourth* Character of Preaching I mentioned is, That it should be Affectionate. The work is the greatest, and the concernment of it, to our selves, and to our hearers,

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ers, infinite; so that it requires the flower and the vigour of our affections, and endeavours: and for us to be cold, and heartless, in declaring things of so vast a moment, suggests that we believe not what we say: and it cannot be expected, that others should be much mov'd by the Preaching, when the Preacher himself seems unconcerned. Religion is Zeal, and if Men are not earnest in it, if it hath not the warmth of their Affections, and the ardours of their Desire, and Love, it hath no considerable hold upon them. These we must endeavour to excite; they are the Springs of the Soul, that move the Will, and put our Powers into Action.

Now

Now the best, and most lasting Affections, are such as are raised by the Understanding; and the knowledg of our Duties, and our Interest: So that we should represent the influencing truths of the Gospel, in plainness, and power, to beget due, and deep conviction in the Mind. But generally 'tis only the wisest sort whose Affections are stir'd in this noblest, and most regular way: The common People, are incapable of much Theory; they have not Souls for much knowledge, nor usually are they moved by this method; It will be hard for you to make them heed Doctrines, though they are never so worthy, or important: their Affections are

raised by figures, and earnestness and passionate representations; by the circumstances of the Voice, and Gesture, and Motion; so that however little you may think these, they must be heeded, and suited to the capacity and genius of your hearers. God himself doth so condescend; he speaks in our Language, and in such Schemes of Speech as are apt to excite the Affections of the most Vulgar, and Illiterate. *St. Paul* became all things to all. He became weak unto the weak, as well as strong to the strong: Milk must be given, as well as strong Meat. There are indeed a sort of conceited weak that are not mov'd but by vain phancies and senseless

less phrases, and unintelligible notions, by a rude loudness and apish gestures and boisterous violence; and who are so qualified are the precious Soul-saving Men, the Teachers they heap up to themselves: To such humours, and follies as these, we may not accommodate; for this is a debasing the Gospel; 'tis the putting Religion into a Fool's Coat, and an exposing of it to the Contempt of Men of Understanding, and Judgment: If Peoples Palates are so deprav'd that they like nothing but Chalk, and Lime, and Mushrooms, we must do them all the good we can, but not be concern'd to please them in their own way. God must be pleased, and not Men

Men, he hath no *delight in Fools*; nor can he approve of Apishness, and Childish folly. Let the end be what it will, we ought to feed our People with wholesome Food, and not with Trash, and Poison, though they long never so much for them: But this we ought to endeavour, *viz.* to give our matter its proper colours, to shew it in that light which may convey it with most advantage into the hearers Hearts, and Affections; to study all the warrantable ways by which Men use to be awakened, and excited; and to press the Truths, and Duties we teach, with a Zeal, and Warmth proportionable to the concernment of them; taking care to avoid all
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indecentcy, and extravagance. Thus of the general Characters of Preaching.

NOW by what hath been discoursed, divers faults in Preaching are reprehended, some of which I shall more particularly Note, under the following Heads.

I. There is a certain stiffness in the composition of many Sermons, in the which Words are set, and Periods measur'd, and Cadences turned, all which argue a vain endeavour to entertain, and please conceited Hearers, without design either to inform the Judgment, to ingage the Will, or to stir up any devout Affections. This way is painful,
but

but the effects of it are harsh, and forced, and unnatural; that possibly may obtain praise from some ill Judges, that have no measure either of good Preaching, or of right Speech, when as they do no manner of good, but expose the Preacher to the disesteem of the Pious and Judicious. What is easie and natural is always best, and most operative: and things so great, and so powerful as the matters of Religion are in themselves, have no need of more than a genuine and proper representation; yea they are debased and hinder'd in their operation by the formality of Elaborate Language.

This is like *fashions* that will
not

concerning Preaching. 61

not last, the modes of it vary continually; and what is rare Language in one time, is foolish and ridiculous in another: But what is natural and proper, lasts always; 'tis relish'd by all judgments, and approv'd in all times.

There is another sort of set Preachers that are so by defect of Parts, they perform nothing but with great ado, and pumping; and after all, their Sense is mean, and their Words lie cross, and untoward, though very much affected, and brought together with pain. 'Tis not possible for a Man of a clear Mind, and just Sense to speak so bad upon the suddain, as they always do upon the most anxious study:

study: There is no need to advise you to indeavour against this defect; those that labour under it might find remedy by studying to have a thorow comprehension of all the Preachable Heads of Theology, and due converse with the fluent and easie Writers

You do not understand me, I suppose, in all this, as if I was against Mens study, and care about the choise, and order of their Words in Preaching, there is much need of this, and the success depends much upon it: but then the thoughts and labour, should be to get such as may most fully and plainly represent our meaning, and convey it into the Mind with most
advan-

advantage; so that the care of words ought to be to speak with the most natural easiness, and freedom; which (as I noted before) is the truest Eloquence, doth most good, and generally affects most.

2. Some Sermons lose their efficacy and force by being too full, and close. Fullness of Sense, and compactness of Writing are real Excellencies, and such as fall to few Men's share: they are very proper, and taking in Discourses, to the Wise especially in matters of Theory and Sepeculation: But the hearers of Sermons are mixt People, among whom usually there are very few of so much Sagacity and Attention, as to be able

able to comprehend, and to go along with a judicious, exactly penn'd Discourse: Whoever would edifie *them*, must dilate, and represent the same things in different lights and colours; There is a certain laxness of Stile that is necessary for them: for that will enter the Mind and move the Affections in one way, that will not in another. And indeed it is painful to *Men of Parts*, to keep their Thoughts even with the current of a full, and close Sermon; the Judgment and Understanding even of Ingenious and Judicious Auditors cannot go so fast as the Tongue of the Speaker; and therefore a competent diffuseness of Stile is acceptable to them

concerning Preaching. 65

them also. Hence it is that Men of fame for Preaching generally succeed worst upon the most solemn occasions, for which they have labour'd most. We do not love to have our Minds kept still upon the stretch, and to be over powered with fulness. You know what Mr. Cowley saith of Wit in Poetry,

Rather than all be Wit let none be there.

I will not go so far in this subject, but certainly there may be too much here; you have observ'd to me how little the strongest, and acuteſt Univerſity Sermons edifie in ordinary Congregations; this I take to be a main reason of it. Indeed upon ſome occasions, in a few Audito-

Auditories, a Man may study Conciseness; but he ought not to take it for a measure of Preaching: as the People will not indure this, so no Preacher can hold it. There is I confess a looseness in speaking that is very nauseous and offensive to the Judicious, when Men dwell upon the same things, and have little, or no Sense in a multitude of Words; this is the extremum on the other hand, and it ariseth from want of judgment and invention.

3. Another fault I have observ'd in some Sermons is *difformity*: heights, and falls; Eloquence, and Sordidness; Wit, and no Sense; this is the fault of Collectors, that make Nose-gays,

gays, and pick a piece out of one Author, and a piece out of another; so that the whole is a medly of different things ill mingled. To avoid this you must be Master of a fullness of Sense, that is your own; and when you make use of any notions you meet with in your reading, you should form them according to your own way of expressing, and not tye your self to the words of the Author: They should be digested into your store of Thoughts, as the various Juice of Flowers is by the industrious Bee; and so made uniform and agreeable; I mean not the uniformity of Homogenious, but of Organical Bodies, in which all the Parts, though

though of different nature, have a proportion, and conspire to make up the beauty and usefulness of the whole. The Doctrines that are for information of maturer judgments, should be expressed with a strength in the Style, suitable to the height of the Matter; and such as are for the directing and exciting the meer populace, with an ease, and familiarity that is proportioned to the subject, and capacities of such hearers.

4. There is a sort of *witticizing* which some use in Preaching, that by all means is to be avoided; the subjects of Sermons are grave and most serious, and ought to be suitably handled: we are to speak as the *Oracles of God*,

God, and as becomes his Messengers, and Ambassadors; and how absurd would it be for Persons of that Character from Temporal Princes, to deliver their message in jingles and quibbles, in witticisms and flourishes. How much more is it so in those that speak from the King of Heaven, in the most important concerns of the Souls of Men: This is foolishness of Preaching indeed; 'tis not speaking in Man's Wisdom, but in Childrens folly: a way of trifling that is despicable in all subjects, much more in such: It is a Profanation of Holy things, and mockery upon Religion. And 'twere to be wished that the Governors of the Church would chastise

chastise such Foplings. This Wit is more reprehensible than the directest Non-sense; for this is Weakness, that is Affectation. Fools by Nature are to be pitied, but these Artificial ones deserve Scorn, and severe Punishment. I cannot forbear speaking thus warmly upon this occasion. It would move any Man's Indignation that hath any Sense of Religion, to see Men play with it at this rate. And to hear such whiffers applauded, (as sometimes it happens) for brave Preachers, would turn any Man's Stomach, that hath any grain of Understanding: It is as if Childish Declaimers should be cried up for mighty Orators; and Morris-dancers for the most accomplished

plish'd of Mankind. These are quite besides the business of Preaching, they design to gratifie the Vain and Wanton Palates, which ought to be reprov'd. They feed with Mushroom, and Haugusts, and empty Dishes, set out with Flowers, or rather with Weeds and Nettles.

I do not by this reprehend all VVit whatsoever in Preaching, nor any thing that is truly such: For true VV it is a perfection in our Faculties, chiefly in the Understanding, and Imagination; VVit in the Understanding is a Sagacity to find out the Nature, Relations, and Consequences of things; VVit in the Imagination, is a quickness in

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the phancy to give things proper Images; now the more of these is in Sermons, the more of Judgment and Spirit, and Life: and without Wit of these kinds Preaching is dull, and unedifying. The Preacher should endeavour to speak sharp, and quick thoughts, and to set them out in lively colours; this is proper, grave, and manly Wit, but the other, that which consists in inversions of Sentences, and playing with Words, and the like, is vile and contemptible fooling.

I have this to advertise more under this Head, that even the Wit that is true, that may be used, and ought to be endeavour'd, should not be hunted after

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after out of the road. A Man in a Journey will not run over Hedges to gather Flowers; and the Preacher is much to blame that forsakes the direct course of his matter to fetch in notions, and elegancies; such as are grave and pertinent, and lie in his way he may use, but to set his phancy a ranging, and beating abroad after them, is folly, and affectation.

But Fifthly, There is a vice in Preaching quite opposite to this, and that is a certain road-dulness, and want of Wit. There are a sort of Preachers that say nothing but what is obvious to every vulgar conceit; nothing but what they take up from common talk; that speak no
D 2 thoughts;

Thoughts ; have no Vivacity in Matter or Stile ; who teach you nothing , excite you not at all ; whatever they deliver is light, superficial, and unthought. This flatness shews want of Understanding, want of Divinity, or want of consideration of Religious Matters. The way to avoid it is for the Preacher to form clear, distinct Conceptions of all the Heads of Theology (Doctrines and Duties) to think them well into his own Mind, to digest and make himself Master of them ; not to content himself with the learning of Memory, and the sayings of Authors, but by deep and pregnant Meditation to form his Conceptions, to consider things, and

to make Observations upon the Passions and Actions of Men; to do this will require Philosophy; and without it a Man cannot define, cannot distribute conceptions into their right places, cannot speak intelligently, and into the bottom of things: and for want of this it is, that there is so much heaviness and weakness in some Men's Preaching: But of this I may have an occasion to speak further in what is to follow.

6. Another fault to be noted, is a desultory sort of skipping from one thing to another, without following any thing home. The Sermons of some consist altogether in little Remarks, and pretty Notes, and strain'd Obser-

ventions. These propose no main business to pursue, but touch abundance of things superficially and slightly: so that no body is taught, none edified: when the Sermon is done, 'tis lost, and no one almost can tell what it was about. The contrary way to this is to be chosen, which is always to propose some chief design, and to pursue that fully in the Doctrinal, and Practical Parts of it, at least so far as it is necessary for the needs of the Hearers. This you should endeavour always; viz. to do right to the subject you undertake, that the People may (if they please) understand it better, and have before their Eyes the proper motives and directions

directions to practise according to it.

7. I observe in some Men's Preaching a certain sordidness, which though Ignorant People may like as plain, and familiar Preaching; yet 'tis such a familiarity as begets contempt. Such is the use of vulgar Proverbs, and homely Similitudes, and rude and clownish Phrases: These are indecencies of speech, and misbecoming the reverence that is due to solemn Discourses and sacred Subjects; and those who can be guilty of them have a certain clownishness of Soul, that hath no taste of what is decorous and becoming. Such grate, and shock all Men of ingenious Sense, and they cannot

hear such stuff without shrinking and blushing for the Preacher. Plainness is the best Character of Speech, especially in a Sermon, but not that which is Bluntness; this degenerates into sordidness, and rustiness.

Having thus treated of the Matter and Stile of Sermons, I shall next speak of the main circumstances of Preaching, which concern the *Voice* and the *Action*.

1. The *Voice* should be lively and earnest; but without any set, or affected tone. It should vary as the matter doth, and may have its risings, and falls, if you take care to shun the extremes of excessive loudness in some

some Periods, and as unfit low-
ness in others: You should avoid
a droning dulness of Speech on
the one Hand, which shews un-
concernment, and want of
Zeal; and a boisterous noise on
the other, which argues Rude-
ness, and want of Modesty, and
Manners.

2. As to the circumstance of
Action, there are two extreams
about it. Some are Mimical,
Phantastical, and violent in their
Motions; this is rude and irre-
verent: others in opposition
stand like Images, and Preach
without any Motion at all; this
is stupid and unnatural. When
a Man speaks about things of
Consequence, is concern'd him-
self, and would have others be
so,

so, he cannot (without great violence) but use some proportioned action. God hath made us so that we must express our inward resentments by outward agitations; and the motion is allowed, and much set by, by all the Masters of Eloquence; it is necessary to the grace of speaking, and hath a considerable share in the influence on the hearers, who are moved by the Eye as well as by the Ear. So that motionless speaking is senseless, and unnatural. It was never taken upon any grounds of reason, but from the restraint of Notes, or an humour of Opposition of the other extream; and is as bad a one it self. Some motion is requisite,

requisite, the care must be to govern it, so that it may be grave and decent; not a violent agitation, and distortion of the whole Body; but a sutable and moderate motion, as the matter shall require; and such as is free and natural, without constraint, or affectation.

IF you now require what way is to be taken for the acquisition of the faculty of ready Preaching, I shall give you my Opinion in some advices; premising to them, that I suppose the knowledge of Philosophy, Languages, History, and a competent Acquaintance with the most substantial Writings of the Ancient and Modern Divines.

vines. In all these I know you are well instructed, and have a due Sense and Relish of Religion upon your own Soul, which is the chief preparation: After which,

(1.) You should endeavour to settle in your mind the genuine Notion of all the Doctrines and Duties of Religion, not contenting your self with general and wandering conceptions, or such as you find in your Memory, from the Books you have Read, but enter into close Meditation on each Head, and lodge things clearly and distinctly in your Thoughts, and by that means make them your own. If you are thus Master of your Sense, you will thereby be

be enabled to speak readily and distinctly upon all occasions; for want of expression, and clearness in speaking arises generally, from defect of meditation, and clear thinking.

(2.) Be much in the reading, and study of the Scriptures; this will furnish you with matter for Proof, for Direction, and for Inforcement; it will give your Stile a tincture that will render it more acceptable to the Pious, and more forcible upon all: and therefore by all means collect and digest in your mind, the Texts that are proper for every Doctrine, and for every Duty; and keep a constant repository of them in your memory,

ry; that they may be always at hand,

(3.) Converſe with the writings of the practical, preſſing, awakening Divines; thoſe that ſpeak moſt naturally and lively, and moſt to the Souls of Men: This will inſenſibly lead you to, and beget in you that beſt ſort of Pulpit-Eloquence.

(4.) In your firſt beginnings write Sermons well ſtudied, well conſider'd, upon every Preachable Head: Go over the whole Body of Theology in that courſe, fill up each ſubject with a juſt Diſcourſe; ſaying all the proper material things you can upon each Argument. And then,

(5.) Make your ſelf perfect
Master

Master of your Sermons, get them fully into your Memory, and indeavour to keep them there: This is indeed painful, but 'tis a labour that I reckon necessary in the beginning, and such as will beget facility and ease, in the future course of your Ministry.

(6.) Preach constantly, indulge not your ease, but set your self to your Work, and reckon upon it as a thing that must be done, without unnecessary intermissions; constant practice begets habits, and without this the faculty will never be attain'd. If you Preach only now and then, a set or solemn Sermon, and not exercise in a continued course, it will be still
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an hard and difficult task to you: but frequency will render the work easie to be perform'd by your self, and what is so will be more easie to be understood by the hearers.

I Have thus given you my Idea of Preaching. If you now ask me what Entertainment Sermons of this sort use to have, It is here as in the case of Books, *ad captum Lectoris*-- I observ'd to you in the beginning, that the hearers are of extreamly different sorts, capacities, and expectations: They come to hear for different ends, and so are pleas'd, or otherwise, as they are gratified, or disappointed. Some to be entertain'd

tain'd by fine Language, and witty Sentences; having no design of being instructed in any of the Doctrines or Duties of Religion; they have no business for that knowledge: They come to Sermons with the same appetites and inclinations as they go to see, and hear Plays; such will by no means like your Preaching in this way, it hath nothing in it to their purpose; and the hearing things so little suitable as principles of Spiritual knowledge, and inforcements of Religious practice, is tedious to them; so that if they cannot sleep, they will talk away the time: An Hour so spent is intollerable; You are never like to have reputation for a
Preacher

Preacher among such. Another sort of hearers are very contrary to these; they have a great zeal for Religion, but then their Heads are full of false Images, and phantastick Principles: they love to have every thing in the phrases to which they have been accustomed, and according to the phancies they have entertain'd; so that your plainness, and simplicity of speaking will not edifie with them; it wants the Life and Power, and spirituality of Preaching; that is, it hath no vain unintelligible Notions, no odd Figures, or Words without Sense: and these are so given up to the admiration of the Teachers of their own Genius, that you can expect nothing

concerning Preaching. 89

thing but to be condemn'd by them as a Preacher of a low Dispensation, and one that is unacquainted with the Spiritualities, and Mysteries of the Gospel. Yea, which you will think very strange, 'tis odds but that they accuse your plainness as unintelligible, and pretend they cannot understand you, because you speak Sense in genuine, proper Words, without foolish Affectations, or phantastick Notions. Thus I know it happens sometimes to the clearest Preachers, who make Plainness their measure, and design, and who have a great faculty in rendring things easie, and intelligible; whereas those that can't in Words without Sense

Sense (which neither the Speakers themselves understand, nor any wise Man can) are taken by those People for the only plain Preachers. The reason of which is this, they have been used to a set of Words and Phrases, which they continually talk, and frequently hear, and therefore though they never had any distinct meaning convey'd to their Minds by them, yet use having made them familiar, they doubt not, but that they fully comprehend the Sense of them, whereas being not used to sound matter and plain speaking, these are looked on as strange and hard things, which their prejudice and their dulness cannot easily admit.

Now

Now these two sorts make up the greatest part of those that lead the vulgar judgments, and under the condemnation of their sentence you must fall. So that it is not very often in this Age, that the true plain Preaching is popular, you must be content to hear affected Triflers, and Ignorant Canters applauded as the Rare Men, the Excellent Preachers, to which all others must give place: while the substantial, and truly learned ones are either disliked, or but indifferently esteem'd. It doth I confess require much patience to hear folly, and non-sense applauded, without contradicting those perverse judgments. But in our
circum-

circumstances this often must be quietly born. 'Twill I hope be enough to you, as it is to all good Men; that the Wise and truly Religious Judge of these things as they are. And whatever the Opinion of Vain and Ignorant Persons may be of the Preaching I have described, it will (I hope) if performed in sincerity, have the approbation of God, and the acceptance, and acknowledgments of all Pious and good Men; and all the World first or last, will be of their mind.

I have thus offer'd you a Scheme of my Thoughts about this part of your Work: you see it is like to be very difficult and laborious; but the rewards
of

of a faithful discharge of this duty (in the other World) are Infinite: Upon these you must fix your Thoughts, and from these draw your Incouragements: But from the present expect but little. You are entering I understand, upon a Charge in a great Town: You will be sure there to have *business* enough, and *encouragements* you will have, if you can be satisfied (as you ought to endeavour) with the pleasure of doing well; but if you look for Ingenuity, Acknowledgments of your Labours, Worldly Advantages, or as much as your Just Rights, you will find your self mistaken. As to this last particular I had an occasion, not long since

since to represent the present state of Ministers, in Corporations and great Towns, in a Letter to a Member of Parliament. I may perhaps deliver you from the trouble of some surprise, and disappointment, by sending you that account, which therefore I here do.

SIR,
IN obedience to your Commands, I have sent you a brief account of the state of the present Clergy in Corporations, as far as I understand it; and I have had competent knowledge and experience in this matter. 'Tis an affair of weighty, and sad consideration, and would require a greater fulness of discourse; but I know to whom I write, and therefore give you but the short hints.

The maintenance of Ministers in great Towns is either by the voluntary Subscriptions of the Parishioners, or by Stated Dues; which are either Old Rates

concerning Preaching. 95

Rates on the Houses, or Small Tythes and Offerings.

The maintenance by Voluntary Subscriptions is very precarious and uncertain: little or none comes from the profest Dissenters: and among others 'tis subject to be withdrawn upon every pet, or displeasure, taken either from a close reproof, or an ungrateful Doctrine: and what a life such a dependence on the humors of the People in such an Age as this is, and what the consequences of it are, is very easie to be understood.

The stated dues by Old Rates on Houses are very small, holding no proportion with the value; or with those set by Act of Parliament on the Houses in London: They are difficult and troublesome to be collected, and among the poor, and meaner sort, which in all Towns are a considerable number, they are lost; for the Minister cannot either in Charity or with Credit, make it a business to contend with them for things small in particulars, though great to him in gross. The Houses of New Erection, are commonly unrated, and pay nothing.

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The Small Tithes, which are the chief maintenance belonging to some Towns, are reduced to very little: the Dissenters, many, if not most of them, absolutely refuse payment: The rest, for the major part, are not brought to reckon for those dues, without great trouble, and long waiting; when they do account, 'tis (for the most) very deceitfully and falsely, concealing what stock they keep, or baffling the Ministers with twenty studied pretensions and evasions; which are very hard for him to disprove, unless he should make it his whole business to look after them.

Offerings, which in great Towns were heretofore considerable, are now scarce any thing; for generally not one in five will own any such due; so that the Minister must dispute whenever he claims his right, and commonly without effect, on Men, who are stiff by Will and not by Conscience: Those that do acknowledge it, pay uncertainly, if at all.

The present ways of recovery of these dues are chargeable, and scarce effectual at last. The Refusers usually will not appear

concerning Preaching. 97

pear when cited to Bishops Courts, and to run them up to Excommunication, when the debt they are cited for is very small, in particulars, looks odiously on the Ministers part. And if they are Excommunicated they will stand so, without taking notice of it, except they are prosecuted to the Writ de Excommunicato Capiendo, which is chargeable to the Prosecutor, and sounds harshly: and when they are taken up, many of them will lie by it, and so all the charge and trouble is lost: and the Minister gets nothing but the name of a Persecutor after all.

The way by Treble Damage will not quit cost for small dues. The way by the Exchequer comes to Gaol too at last; and if the Prisoner be not willing to pay, or lie in close durance, he fees the Gaol-keeper, and goes in and out as he pleaseth.

So that generally, the livings in Corporations are fallen from what they were before our unhappy troubles a third part at least, in their value. But the work, and difficulties are as much increast; Preaching twice every Lord's Day is every where ex-

pected, and not omitted without great offence, and advantage given to Dissenters. More private diligence is needed, for the convincing Gain-sayers, and disabusing the misled; for the confirming the weak, and settling the wavering; which is above half our work, added by the malignant temper of the Age, and as necessary as any of the enjoind offices.

Whether such maintenance, and such circumstances of livelihood, be sufficient encouragement for Men who have spent their whole time, their Money, and their pains, to fit them for the publick service of the Church, whether I say these be encouraging invitations for such to leave their quiet habitations in the University, and to put themselves into troublesome and uneasie busines; whether such maintenance be sufficient to enable them to relieve the Poor, who will be sure to call at their doors, to keep Hospitality, and to provide for their Families; to pay taxes and payments, First Fruits, Tenths, Procurations, Paschal Rents, Poor Rates, Tithing Rates, &c. In which they
are

concerning Preaching. 99

are sure to pay the utmost; to enable them to repair and keep in tolerable condition their old, and ruin'd Houses, and to maintain a Reader or Assistant, which is necessary in great places to perform some offices, which the Minister himself may not be able always to attend. These things I hope the wisdom and justice of the Parliament will in due time consider, and take some care for the improving this small maintenance, either after the pattern of what they have done for London, or otherwise; and so to order matters, as that they may receive their dues without so much trouble and vexation, of which they shall be sure to have enough, in the duties of their respective places. By this course I am perswaded the Credit and Safety of the Protestant Religion may be promoted, the blessing of God obtained, and our other interests better establishd.

THis is the brief of the case, of which in some particulars of it, I doubt you will have large experience; therefore arm your self with Courage and Patience, and resolve to do your duty however you are treated: This will be sure to meet rewards elsewhere, whatever entertainment it finds here; and upon the hopes of these, we must endeavour to live (as we most comfortably may) till we arrive at the World of just retribution. And I pray God by his Grace conduct us thither.

I am,

Your Affectionate Friend.

A Seasonable
DEFENCE
O F

Preaching:
AND THE
Plain Way of it.



L O N D O N :

Printed for C. Brome, at the
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yard. 1703.

A. S. 1840

DEFENCE

OF

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AND THE

TO



LONDON:

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A

DIALOGUE.

A. **M**Y Friends, you are well met here; I suppose your business now is walking; and I am for a turn or two with you.

B. You may well guess so; for you seldom meet us here, in the Church, upon any other occasion.

A. I wish you had spoken that, *Penitently*; So I am sure you ought to have done. And if you had come a little sooner, you had learnt that duty from a very good Sermon.

B. A

B. *A Sermon!* 'Twas never well with the World since we have had so much *Preaching*.

A. To the same purpose said the Idolatrous *Jews* to the Prophet *Jeremiah*, that since they had *left to burn Incense to the Queen of Heaven*, they had wanted all things, and had never seen good days. All times have afforded matter enough of complaint, and I must confess there hath been a sort of *Preaching* that hath greatly contributed to the evils of ours: but in this place, and such like, there is, I hope, no danger of hearing any of those *Pestilential Doctrines*, that once poisoned the publick Air. I am sure the true *Primitive Christianity* teacheth things that

concerning Preaching. 3

that would cure all our maladies were they duly heeded, and put in practice: I need not tell you how earnestly it every where presseth *Humility* and *Modesty*, *Patience* and *Self-denial*, *Charity* and *Peace*, *Mortification* to the World, and *Conscientious submission* to Governours. These our Ministers Preach, and I suppose you will not say, that *such* Preaching promotes the evils of the times; if it do, 'tis very accidentally, and so, as the Grace of God is turn'd into lasciviousness, and the strivings of his Spirit may contribute to Men's greater hardness.

B. I speak not against Preaching; but we have too much on't.

A. We

A. We have more reason to *thank* God for the plenty, than to *quarrel* at the abundance. It would be very humorfome and foolish to complain that the Rivers run with more Water than is necessary for our occasions; and 'twould have been absurd perverseness in the *Israelites* to have murmured, because more Manna fell than they could use.

B. Do you not think then that there may be over-doing in this?

A. Yes doubtless; when *all* Religious Offices are run into Preaching; when *that* excludes the publick Prayers, and Catechising; when private Preaching Days are set apart without

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concerning Preaching. 5

Authority, to humour the wantonness of vain People; all these are over-doing.

B. But is not constant Preaching twice every Sunday, besides occasional Weekly Sermons, too much?

A. It may be too much for the Strength and Health of the Minister; it may be too much, where the People will not frequent those Afternoon Sermons, or are prejudiced against them; it may be so in Country Parishes, and where no remarkable inconvenience ariseth from the omission of them: But in Cities and great Towns, (as the times are) they are in a manner necessary; since without them, People would idle more about,

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and

and more would run to the Conventicles; and 'twould occasion the reproach of laziness, on our Ministers, and turn divers off from the Church, that are kept in tolerable order by this double diligence.

There is not just so much Preaching set and stated by the Laws of Christ, and the Church, as must not be exceeded; but so much is due as Edification, Peace and Order require; now this is more or less, according as circumstances of times are; and ours are such as make it very behooveful for Ministers to abound in this work; what is grievous in it is to *them*, who have much more labour imposed on them than former times

concerning Preaching. 7

times expected, and instead of being advanced in proportionable maintenance, and encouragement, *that* is *fallen* as much (or more) than their work is increased. So that 'tis indeed very hard upon *them*, but *we*, the People, have no reason to complain.

B. But Preaching being so frequent and common, becomes contemptible by it; and is so much the less heeded.

A. This is too true: and 'tis a great Evil and Discouragement to those that labour in the Word and Doctrine: but what help for it? To restrain and put a stop to the course of Preaching to cure this abuse, would in likelihood be followed with a

train of greater Evils ; and as circumstances are, it could not be done, without manifest danger to the great Interests both of Church and State. If the regular Clergy should leave frequent Preaching, the Conventicle-meetings would swallow all : and therefore, upon the whole, whatever is to be thought of the thing it self, nakedly, and abstractedly considered, it is not, I think, any matter of just complaint, that there is so much Preaching : where the fault is not in the quality, the plenty is no grievance.

C. For my part I must confess I seldom hear Sermons, I love the Prayers of the Church,
and

concerning Preaching. 9

and I care not much for Preaching.

A. It is a great unhappiness to mankind, that we are so apt to run from one extreme into another: In the late times (and still among some) Preaching and Hearing were in a manner all the Religion: and the Prayers of the Church despised, and excluded; and now, some on the quite contrary, pretend to magnifie the publick Prayers, but vilifie Preaching; and make Hearing nothing. So that one duty and part of Religion is set up to conflict and destroy another. And I observe, that usually People of this pretence, do in good earnest care for neither.

Preaching is an Evangelical Institution, and the Commission given the Apostles was, that they should go *and teach all Nations*: and Saint Paul saith, 'twas necessary for him to *Preach the Gospel*, and woe to him if he did it not; and that he was not sent to *Baptise* but to *Preach*. 1 Cor. 1. 17. viz. not to do the former chiefly. *Faith comes by hearing*; and how shall they hear without a Preacher? This was the way whereby God conveyed his mind unto Men in all times. Noah was a Preacher of Righteousness; and God spake unto them of old, by the Preaching of the Prophets. I need not Preach more on this plain and well known Subject.

C. But

concerning **Preaching.** 11

C. But *ours* I suppose is not like the *Apostolical* and *Prophetical* Preaching.

A. It is not indeed like theirs in respect of the *immediate* inspiration which the Prophets and Apostles had, but our Ministers have not. It is not like in respect of the Authority of an immediate mission, assisted by the miracles they were inabled to perform; it is not like in respect of the persons preacht to, who were chiefly Infidels; or the circumstances of the action, *without* the settled forms of decency, which now are used, but could not be then. But as to the *matter*, and the *ends*, which are the main things, our preaching is as theirs was; our

Ministers Preach the same *Jesus* in the circumstances of his Birth, Life, Death, Resurrection, Ascension, Mediation, and all the rest; the same Doctrines, Duties, Incouragements, Rewards and Punishments: with the same design of persuading Men in order to the glory of God, and the Salvation of their Souls, as the Apostles, and Primitive Preachers did.

C. All these were necessary to be Preach'd to Men while they continued in *Judaism*, or *Heathenism*; but what need of them now, when they are believ'd and entertained in the World?

A. There is still need, and will be so to the Worlds end. There are young that must be
initia-

initiated, and adult that are to be confirmed; there are weak to be strengthened; and doubting to be resolved, and settled; there are Pious to be directed, and Wicked to be reprov'd; There are Hereticks and other Erroneous, and many who at the bottom are Infidels, that must be confuted, and withstood: These needs are and will be still, and Preaching is the ordinary means that God hath appointed in his Church to Minister to such occasions, so that this was not a *temporary* Ordinance to serve the first times only, but is of perpetual necessity and use. And therefore when our Saviour delivered the Commission to the Apostles to

teach all Nations, he gave it to them and their successors, and annext a promise of his perpetual help, which continues still, and will always, viz. that he would be *with them to the end of the world.*

C. Well, well! I think I know as much as the Preacher can tell me; and therefore shall not trouble my self much with hearing Sermons.

A. No wise Man will think you the more knowing for that opinion. You have read what one that knew a great deal said, *Seest thou a Man wise in his own conceit, there is more hope of a fool than of him,* Prov. 26. 12. And another, *He that thinks he knows any thing, knows nothing yet as he ought*

concerning Preaching. 15

ought to know. 1 Cor. 8. 2. For even Apostles, and the greatest, confest that they knew *but in part*, and saw *through a glass darkly*. 1 Cor. 13. 9. And Solomon you know hath pronounc'd roundly against *opiniators*, saying, That 'tis the *fool that rageth, and is confident*, Prov. 14. 16. But if you did know so much, that you were not to be taught, yet since others do not, and Preaching is necessary for their wants, you ought to encourage their attendance by your example, though you had no other reason to hear Sermons: Yea, you would have need however to hear on your own score; For the design of Preaching is not to teach Men new things; not
always

always to inform the Understanding in matters before unknown, but sometimes it gives order and method to our thoughts, which perhaps were perplext, and so sets things in their right place, helping us to clearness of conception, which is a great advantage: It is design'd to bring known things to our Minds, to render them present to our Thoughts, to awaken Consideration, and by that to excite the Affections, and ingage the practice. It is not so much our want, that we do not know our duty, as that we are dead, and cold, and averse to practise what we are acquainted with; so that it is the business of Preaching to set before us the proper

proper motives, and considerations to move us to futable action. The grand cause of Mens Sins and Neglects is *inconsideration*, and Preaching is a means to cure *that*. And let me ask you, whether you do not sometimes find your self much moved by what is said, and prest by another, when you had had the same things in your mind before, without effect?

C: I cannot deny that; but I see but little good that Preaching doth in the World: Men remain the same after all their hearing.

A. More good, many times, is done than appears; and I doubt not but it is so in the present case. There are Seeds of Piety

Piety and Vertue sown in the Soul, that shew themselves not a long while after, till time, further consideration and occasion bring them forth; many Convictions lodged in the Consciences of wicked Men, that lie there like fire in a Flint, till they are excited, and then they become means and instruments of repentance: many hints of truths taken without present emotion, that afterwards much influence the understanding and practice, some habitual fear of God, and love and esteem of Religion, planted insensibly in the mind, that in their season work great effects; and I doubt not but by these, Men that are very bad, are in divers

concerning Preaching. 19

divers instances restrain'd and rendered less wicked than otherwise they would be. And though I have as deep a Sense of the vileness of the World as most Men have, yet I question not but that it would be very much worse were it not for Preaching; many there are who publicly own, and shew the benefit they receive from it, and 'tis fit the River should run on, though but few Men, or Beasts are refresh'd by it.

C. We have indeed read of great effects of Preaching heretofore, as of *Jonas* on the *Ninevites*, and *St. Peter's* on the three thousand converted at one Sermon; and *Orpheus* and others among the Heathens, have done strange

strange things by the force of their Poetry and Eloquence ; but now we see no such things ; which is a plain indication that our Preaching is little worth.

A. 'Tis an ill measure to judge of the worth of things by their success. The Instances you give are great, but as considerable Preachers as those have not succeeded, as they did. You know how it was with *Noah* in reference to the old World, to whom he preach'd many Years without success on any, besides some of his own Family : *Lot*, no doubt, exhorted and reprov'd the *Sodomites*, but to how little purpose ? The Prophets were earnest and powerful in their Preaching, and

concerning Preaching. 21

and yet few believed their report, but the People continued still a stubborn and perverse generation. Our Saviour Preacht to many that would neither receive him, nor his Doctrine, notwithstanding the Divinity of his Person, and the Power of his Miracles: And St. Paul, one of the most powerful of Preachers, after great pains with the *Thessalonians* seems to fear that he had labour'd in vain with them, 1 *Thes.* 3. 5. and after much instruction bestowed on the *Hebrews* he complains that though for the time, they ought to have been teachers, they had still need to be taught again which were the Principles of the Oracles of God. *Hebrews* 5. 12. So that the
want

want of success is not always justly chargeable on the Preaching. And *ours* certainly hath as great a subject, as great ends, as great motives, and as great helps as ever any, bating the *immediate* and *extraordinary*, had.

C. Therefore doubtless the defect is in the Preaching, and our Preachers have not the *way*, or ability to use those advantages.

A. Our Preachers are Men, and have imperfections; and I confess there are divers sorts of Preaching that have no persuasive force in them: But yet many that have moved much, have been in their Persons, knowledge, and other natural talents as indifferent, as generally our Divines are: and some of our
Preaching

concerning Preaching. 23

Preaching is as substantial, plain and forceable, both as to the matter, and manner of it as perhaps any Age since the Apostles hath yielded; and yet such doth not prevail. There is therefore somewhat more in it than you imagin.

C. Pray what?

A. In order to your information in this matter, I intreat you to consider, that in all affairs, both of nature and morality, the seemingly greatest and fittest means, many times, produce nothing; when things mean, and to appearance, contemptible, work wonders. This might be exemplified in divers of the great changes of the World, and is to be seen daily
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in the variations that happen in the Spirits, and Actions of particular Men. There are certain dispositions required in the Subject, in order to its being affected, or altered by the Agent: where those dispositions are, a small matter makes great impression; but where they are not, the greatest effects nothing: The most warm Sun, and seasonable Showers cause no verdure on a Rock; when a few kindly Beams, and favourable Drops make the Grass shoot in the fruitful Meads. There are analogous preparations and dispositions in the Spirits of Men, that arise from the concurrence of many circumstances, the conjunction of which

which is not observed: where such are as are proper to incline the subject, mean instruments work mightily, where they are wanting, the *same*, yea and those that in themselves are *more potent* and forcible, are fruitlessly employ'd. Now under the appearance of the same principles, inclinations, humours and appetites, there is a vast insensible diversity in these unheeded circumstances; so that one is powerfully moved by that which no way affects another; as we see in a trivial instance of one Man's being inflamed by the Passion of Love by the sight of an agreeable Beauty, that is nothing taking to another, equally Amorous: and the smallest thing

thing kindles him that is so insensibly disposed, when all the charms of the same Person are lost upon another. I give this instance, not out of lightness in so serious a matter, but because I cannot at present think of a better, that so plainly illustrates what I endeavour to represent.

C. This shews indeed how particular Men may be sometimes moved by small things, when the same, and greater, make no impressions elsewhere. But how is it that multitudes are strongly affected together, as in the case of *St. Peter's* three thousand, and the sudden conversion of whole Nations?

A. The Persons that were instruments

struments in those wonderful conversions, were acted by an extraordinary Spirit, which gave them extraordinary assistance, and prepar'd the hearts of Men for those wonderful changes; and it was not the bare natural force of their Preaching, and Eloquence, that was the cause of those mighty operations: So that these are not fair instances in our case.

C. But will you not grant that Preaching hath generally affected more in other of the ordinary Ages of the Church, than it doth in this?

A. I must grant it, and think that it scarce ever influenced the People less.

C. Well! and is not the cause
of

of the want of ordinary success, the meanness and defects of the present Preaching.

A. You may gather from what I have been saying, that I do not judge so. As in particular Persons, so in publick Bodies, and in whole Nations there may be a concurrence of favourable or cross circumstances that either dispose to, or hinder the effect and influence of Preaching. You remember that in the beginning of the late unhappy times, the Preaching of the *Puritan* Ministers (then so call'd) did great things, strangely prevailing upon the People; and there were, no doubt, considerable changes wrought upon many of their
Lives

Lives by it, at least, to Reformation from open Prophaneness, and Irreligion; which we have no need to ascribe to their having greater matters to say than were said before, or since: But there was then a concurrence of many things that disposed the Multitude to be so affected. They were much scared with the noise of *Superstition* and *Po-pery*, by those who pretended themselves to be the only Preachers, and Defenders of the *pure*, and *Spiritual* Religion: and People that are frightened are softned, and rendred very impressible: and then, the pretences of those Men were very taking, it was all *Light* and *Mystery*, and *Spirituality*, that they

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taught, set out by new conceits, and new phrases, by great earnestness and fervours of mighty zeal, which things especially when they are *new*, fill the imagination, and by that work exceedingly upon the affections of the vulgar. Besides which, the times were troubled, and discontented; Men were angry with their Governours, and dissatisfied with the legal establishments (which then 'twas part of the *power* of *godliness* to oppose) And this begat the greater opinion of, and affection to those Preachers, and their Doctrines: Theirs were looked on as the only Soul-saving Sermons, and those conceits contributed mightily to the

concerning Preaching. 31

the success of them: so that they could not choose but prevail upon warm, imaginative People, so prepared and disposed. But when the constitutions of the Church were destroyed, and those ways no longer met opposition, when the novelty of the Notions and Phrases was over, and the things began to grow stale, and accustomed to them, then you may remember, that those moving Preachers affected nothing so much as they had done before: Then we heard great complaints of the comparative. un-fre-quency of conversions, and the loss of that warm zeal that the People were acted by in the former Season. Such were the

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dispo-

dispositions that contributed to *their* popularity : But *our* Ministers are under the quite contrary disadvantages, so that 'tis a rare thing if any of them be very popular, though never so excellent Preachers.

C. Pray what are those disadvantages you speak of?

A. The generality of the People have their phancies prepossessed with the Notions, Phrases, and Ways of those other Men, and so are prejudiced, or indisposed to that Preaching that would instruct them better. Many of them follow those Teachers into Conventicles, and several that do not, have an hankring after the 'Garlick and Onions; and others are cold
and

and indifferent to such matters one way, or other: The hurt that the irregular leading Men did by their Preaching, hath begot in divers a dislike and disesteem of the thing it self: and for *their* sakes also the Persons of our Ministers undergo disrespect and contempt: Their practices have begot in many an aversion, or at least a disregard to the Clergy, as *such*, not distinguishing between the Nocent and the Innocent: Atheists, Papists, Phanaticks, the debauched livers, and the covetous envious, make it their business to slander, vilifie, and expose them. The preferments that are good raise envy, the vast number of mean and poor

Vicarages beget contempt, and both the one and the other, as ill-will can take occasion, are applied to the whole Order.

C. But do you not think the present Clergy have a great many faults that deserve the disrespect that is fallen on them?

A. So big a Body of Men cannot be without Faults: but 'twould be too great a diversion from our present business to discourse what I have to say of that now, I may take another occasion to talk with you fully about it; I shall only note at present, that they suffer for others faults as much, or more, than for their own. Many of the old *Romish* Priesthood got great possessions by abusing the credu-

credulity of the People at their Death; and the contrary humor prevails so much now, that scarce any thing is given by Will to Clergy or Church uses: even the little that is left is thought too much, and every one (almost) is nimming, and catching from them what he can. The Fanatical and Seditious Clergy Preach'd us into Rebellion, and many are so set against the whole Order by it, that they cannot endure any of that Gown, though most opposite to those Principles, and Ways: Now the case being thus as to their Faculty and Persons, it cannot be expected that their Labours should be very taking; and since there is such an un-

happy conjunction of so many other circumstances to indisp^{ose} the People to the present Preaching, it is no wonder our Preachers have not that influence, and lead not the populace, as some others have done.

C. But the Non-conforming Preachers do it still, though the Novelty you spoke of be over, which is a sign it was not that which occasioned their so great prevalency, and success,

A. Novelty was one of the concurring circumstances mentioned ; that is gone indeed, but the others are revived, and new added, the fears of Popery, the opposition to Establishments, the discontent, the glory of being

ing thought more Godly, the phancy of Persecution, and such like, are as formerly : and there are over and above, the great excess of Atheism and Profaneness, that the scandals they have brought on Religion have occasioned ; and their pity towards their Teachers whom they look on as oppressed, by being displaced : These make them stick close, and to hear their Preachers with more Affection and zeal of Attention, which affords them advantages for Fame and Applause. But for all this, though when they declaim against *Idolatry, Superstition, Will-worship, Formality*, the People sigh and take on, and seem to be much moved ; yet

let them but Preach heartily and home against *Malice, Censoriousness, bitter Zeal, Lying, Slandering, Schism, Disobedience to Lawful Governors, Spiritual Pride, Waywardness, fondness towards uncertain Opinions*, and such like Sins of the Partics; they will then find very cold Entertainment of their Doctrine, and move no Passions by it, but Rage and Animosity against themselves; and the Consequents, withdrawals from their Meetings, and bitter revilings of their Persons. So that indeed their Teachers how powerful soever esteem'd have not power to move them to any thing contrary to their Humor, and the corrupt Interest of their Party: and therefore I never heard

heard but of one Man among them who durst venture to tell them plainly and honestly their own Sins; and him, though otherwise the most considerable Person that goes with them, they worry, and persecute with their bitterest reproaches and invectives.

D. For my part I think the way for our Ministers to bring the People back again to our Church, would be to out-preach those Teachers which you so much condemn.

A. But who shall be Judge what sort of Ministers out-preach the other? The People so disposed and prepossessed, as I have shewn ours generally are, will always judge on the side of the

the Men that flatter them, and cant in their Phrases, and stand in opposition to the Government; so that though our Ministers spake all like Angels, and all theirs brayed like Asses, those People would give the power and spirituality on *their* side. I suppose, you know the Apologue, the Nightingale and Cuckoo sung, the Ass was judge; The appeal was made, and the Sentence was, That he could not deny but the Nightingale did well, but for *a plain Song* he was for the *Cuckoo*.

D. They will confess indeed that there is not so much Eloquence and fine Language in their Sermons, but they are com-

concerning **Preaching.** 41
commended and followed for
their *Plainness*.

A. *Plainness* is one of the best
characters any Sermon, or other
Discourse can have; and he is
the Speaker that hath the *art* to
be *plain*. But one of the greatest
faults I find with those Mens
Sermons is, that they are not
so. They generally state their
Doctrines confusedly, in words
metaphorical and *ambiguous*; and
direct to practice *mystically*, and
obscurely in *Phrases*, and odd
Schemes of Speech, not under-
stood, and scarce intelligible;
as hath been sufficiently shewn
in divers late Books. These
the People having been used to,
by them in the late times,
though they understand no
meaning

meaning in them, yet they take them to be plain; at least to be so to *spiritual* Understandings, which they presume their own are. Another part of their Plainness consists in *homely similitudes*, and rude and blunt Allusions, accommodated to the humor of the Vulgar, who love such *familiar Preaching*, as they call it, which is indeed a debasing of Religion, and exposing what they deliver to the scorn of those of a better relish. Whereas our Ministers represent their Doctrines and Instructions in clearness of Thought, and simplicity of Speech, without nonsensical Mysteries, and Words without Meaning. This I am sure is so in those that I hear, and
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I hope most other regular Ministers endeavour the same.

D. And yet I have heard People complain that they cannot understand those Ministers.

A. Some would say, they have been so much used to nonsense, that Sense is a hard thing to them: Plainest things may seem difficult to those that are not accustomed to hear them. Our Ministers find it necessary sometimes to shew the reasonableness of the Principles and Duties of the Christian Religion, for the assistance of those of more advanced Understandings, against the pretences and assaults of Atheists and Infidels: and 'tis impossible so to express
all

all the matters that concern those great subjects, as that every vulgar Head, that hath not been used to thinking, and deep reasoning, should presently take them. No, these though never so plainly discours'd will require manly, exercised minds, or they will not be receiv'd, or comprehended; and Ministers must divide the word to every one his portion, and not always speak to one sort. If there be any thing in this complaint, here I am sure is the ground, which the Preachers cannot help, except they could create Understandings for their Hearers: Otherwise they endeavour, profess and practise Plainness: and in those subjects too, as far as the
the

the nature of the thing will bear. Their Ornament and all they pretend as Language, is Plainness: and the great fault they accuse the others of is want of it: you may see in their Books against them that they chiefly reprove, and expose those Men for their affectation of mysterious Nonsense, and words without Knowledge, that is, for their not being intelligible, and plain.

D. Plain Preaching doubtless is best: and that it may be is the reason that the most *learned* Men are not the best Preachers; for they speak in a Scholar like way, and cannot descend to ordinary Capacities.

A. I have indeed often heard
that

that spoken as a maxim, but though it hath some shew of truth, yet there is much mistake, if not malice against Learning in it. There are a sort of learned Men who have spent most of their time, and pains upon *Languages* and *Antiquities* (things in their kind very good and useful) others whose chief employment hath been *School-Divinity*, and the Spinofities of Controversie: and these of each kind, generally get great fame for Learning. But then, perhaps, they do not exercise themselves in Preaching, which is a faculty very distinct from those studies, and requires proper helps and indeavours, and therefore it happens, when such
Preach,

concerning Preaching. 47

Preach, that their Sermons are dry and harsh, favouring of the crabbedness of their Studies and having little of the Genius of Moral and Practical Divinity: This I know is the case of some, I say not of all the Learned Men of those sorts. And this I think is the occasion of the Observation. But then there is another sort of Learned Men, whose design hath been to study things, to furnish their Minds with clear and right Conceptions, to make Observations on Human Nature, the Manners and Actions of Men, to turn their Thoughts, after due Preparations, towards practical Theology, to take Parochial Charges, and to exercise themselves in frequent Preaching:

Preaching: And these are by their learning and knowledge inabled to speak with the most judgment, propriety and plainness. For (as I intimated before) it requires Parts and Understanding to be plain. He must think distinctly and clearly that would teach so: and the true useful Learning is the proper instrument to inable a Man for that.

D. But if so much Knowledge and Understanding is necessary to the constituting a true and plain Preacher, methinks we should not have so *many* in that business: for the maintenance of Ministers is in most places so small, that it will not afford encouragement for such Men; and
others

others that are unqualified disparage the Profession, and do mischief to the publick.

A. If I should speak to the thing it self, I should say, that as the maintenance for Ministers, and the consequents are, possibly a much less number of Preachers might suffice; But our circumstances must be considered: The common People count almost nothing else Service, and discharge of duty in supply of a Cure, but Preaching: and the Dissenters carry all by *that*, so that as our affairs are, *general indifferent* Preaching may be more expedient, than much *better*, when more *limited* and *restrained*. But as to this, the Governours of the Church are the

the best Judges of what is fit, and we are to acquiesce in what they ordain.

C. I think that neither they, nor we need make so much ado about it, for Preaching is no part of *Divine Worship*.

A. I believe you are out in that, for pray what do you call *Divine Worship*?

C. *Prayer, and Thanksgiving, and Sacramental Communion.*

A. You name me some of the parts of *Worship*, but what is the general Nature, and Notion of it? Is it not the solemn acknowledging and honouring of God, in the ways he hath appointed?

C. Well! and what then?

A. Then! it follows that
Preaching

concerning Preaching. 51

Preaching is Worship, and so is Hearing. For Preaching is publishing God's Mind and Will, that the People may know his Truth, and obey his Laws: and are not his Wisdom, Holiness and Legislative Authority thereby glorified? If they are not known, how shall they be believ'd? if not believ'd how can they be honoured? and how can they be either known or believ'd without being publish'd? how can *they believe on him of whom they have not heard, and how can they hear without a Preacher?* Rom. 10. 14. This is part of his Homage and Worship, he is sent to *Preach* the Gospel. And *Publick Hearing* God's Word Preach'd, is part of the *Peoples* Worship,

Worship, since thereby we solemnly acknowledge, that he is our Lord, and that we desire to know how we may acceptably serve him: That he is our Teacher, and we are willing to be instructed by his Word declared and explained by his Messengers: That in him is our supreme Happiness, and that we are desirous to know how we may enjoy him; and all this is doing solemn honour to God our Maker, and why this should be denied to be Worship, I cannot tell.

C. This I have often heard; as I suppose you have also.

A. It is true, but we should not receive every bold saying to the prejudice of our duty. There

There are many such that pass for current among those that are willing to entertain them, that would not bear the tryal; and we ought to examine the things we hear before we admit them.

C. I shall not differ from you in that. But pray don't you think that *Catechising* is better and more useful than so much Preaching?

A. Such comparisons are odious. One duty should not be commended to the disparagement of another; each ought to have its place. And indeed Catechising is a sort of Preaching; it is but another way of teaching the Principles of Christian Religion; and is no doubt very useful, and much needed:

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so

so that the Pulpit-Preaching should not exclude this, both because the Church hath required it, and because that will enter and make impression one way, that will not another. And Catechising hath been used in the best Ages of the Church with very good success. This you know our Minister doth perform one season of the Year; till all the Youth is gone over that he can get to that Exercise: and during all that time he Preacheth also in the Afternoon upon some Catechistical head, in order for the Instruction of the Men and Women, as well as Children. So that as Preaching doth not exclude Catechising, neither doth Catechising exclude that. It
is

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is double labour I confess for the Preacher so to do, but the People (at least in great Towns) will not be contented without the Afternoon Sermon, and a Minister cannot do his duty to the Church, and his charge, without the other, in fit times. On this occasion I must take notice to you, that generally the People are very cold, negligent, and wanting to their Children in this matter, in that they do not duly Catechise them at home, and do their parts for the instructing them in the principles of Religion; without something of this kind, what is done in publick will not signify much: And 'tis through the want of Domestick instructi-

on, that People grow up' so much in Ignorance, and are thereby so apt to be blown about by every wind of vain Doctrine; and to be drawn away from the Church by every pretender that whistles them either to the Church of *Rome*, on the one hand, or the Sects on the other.

C. But Catechising you say is Preaching, and what! would you have private Men Preach?

A. Yes, every private Christian may and ought to Preach in this Sense. Every such is a Priest to his own Family, that is, it his duty to teach them the great things of Religion, according to the best of his skill, and knowledg. This is one way

way to provide for our Families, and 'tis the most necessary. Men had better neglect the getting their Children and Servants Bread and Cloaths, than to omit the care about this greater and more needed provision. 'Tis noted to the honour of the Holy Patriarch, That he would *teach his Children.* Timothy was taught the Scriptures from a Youth, and all Parents are required to bring up their Children in the *nurture and admonition of the Lord.* Were not this duty so much neglected, Ministers would find their People more teachable, and less incapable of the greater and stronger truths that they yet know not; more tenacious of,

and better settled in those that they know already, and more able to shame, and to resist the attempts of Gain-sayers.

Among all the Preaching we have, this is very much needed, and the great defect that is the occasion of most of our Church-maladies lies here. We are very apt to catch at any thing that may fasten a blame on our Ministers, when there is the least shew of neglect on their parts; I wish we could be sensible of, and reform this great one of our own.

C. But what think you of the *Homilies*? Are not *they* very useful, and fit to be read in Churches, instead of so much other Preaching? For my

my part I should like that.

A. The *Homilies* contain very good, pious, and wholsom Instructions and Doctrines; and in due place and time may be used with great profit and advantage. But I suppose you do not pretend to have them in to exclude all *other* Preaching; For that would render the abilities of learned Ministers (as to this part of their Office) useless. There are many Occasions which those Discourses make no provision for; and by such a practice the People in all likelihood would be very much discontented, if not inflamed. I suppose therefore you mean not that the *Homilies* should thrust out all *other* Preaching, but that in some

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places,

places and times, they might be profitably used.

C. No, I think it would be well if they were generally enjoin'd; and such others added to them as should be thought reasonable, and fit.

A. I have as great a reverence for that Book as you, and as great a Sense of the inconveniences that arise from the defects of many Preachers. But we must not always judge of things, as they are, nakedly in their natures, but circumstances must be weigh'd. Publick Governours are not only to consider the goodness, but *expediency*; and in reference to a due judgment in that, many extrinsecal matters are to be taken into the account.

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account. Now as our case is we have (blessed be God) plenty of learn'd and most excellent Preachers (as many I believe as any Age or Nation ever had) Those have bestowed much time, pains, and cost for the furnishing themselves with abilities for the Pulpit ; and after all, to suppress their excellent, and useful labours, and to set them upon the same level with those that can but read, would be a great discouragement to them, and loss to the Church : it would dishearten and divert young Students in the Universities, be a great damp upon learning, and in all likelihood, destroy the glory of those venerable Fountains of Piety and Literature :

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Besides

Besides which, the People you know are so prejudiced, that it would possess them with rage against their Governours, and contempt of their Ministers, fill the Conventicles, and 'tis to be fear'd, make our breaches and divisions incurable. So that certainly you are not in earnest in this, or if you are, I suppose there are but very few of your mind. I have heard some talk indeed that they thought it might do well, if only some select Men in every Diocess (and those to be seated in the most eminent places) should be allow'd to Preach; and the same enjoined to make every Year so many Sermons to be deliver'd to the Bishop, as in the whole

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whole should come to fifty two: besides some for the Anniversary Days; that a Volume of those Sermons should be printed Yearly. That each Minister of those not Licensed to Preach their own, should have a Copy, and no more be printed than would suffice for *them*: That they should read, or recite one of these by heart, every Sunday, till they should arrive to such Age and Ability, as to be thought fit to be intrusted with the instructing the People with their own Sermons. What this would do, and how practicable it is, I shall not pretend to determine: It looks I confess plausibly enough. But I am no proposer of new projects; these

these matters must be left to our Governours; and I mention this only by the by.

C. You are resolv'd to have your own opinion in all things we have talked on; and you shall for me. But notwithstanding all you have said, I shall not be persuaded to have so good an opinion of Preaching, as you seem to have, till I have reason to think that the Preachers believe their own Doctrines.

A. By that you seem to intimate that you think they do not: A very hard thought, that should not be entertain'd lightly. What any Man believes we cannot tell, but by his professions: and the Clergy make zealous and earnest profession of
of

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of the Christian truths; and therefore 'tis great injustice, and uncharitableness to judge otherwise of them, except upon clear evidence. *Charity thinketh no evil*, it makes the best and most candid interpretations of things, that are capable of wrong construction: But to judg and surmise evil where there is no appearance of it, this is to exercise a Lawless and Brutish force upon the names of Men, and to *rejoyce in iniquity*, as the Apostle speaks, 1 Cor. 1. 13. No ones reputation can be safe from any aspersions, if Men may take this lewd liberty of fastening the worst they can phancy on them; so that except you can make out what you say
(which

(which I am sure you cannot) you manifestly incurr the guilt of being an accuser of the Brethren. To asperse any private Christian in this manner, is a great Sin; How much more is it so to slander an whole Order of publick Persons, that bear a Sacred Character. For you do not only injure them in their Persons, but mischief others by it, whom by such reproaches you prejudice against them, and so hinder the good that otherwise they might do by their Labours: On which account the Reputation of Ministers is and ought to be dear to those that are truly Honest and Conscientious: and where Men love to pickeer, and to find faults with Ministers;

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Ministers ; 'tis a plain case that they have some corrupt byas that sways them in those Censures.

C. For my part I thank God I have none. But by their *fruits ye shall know them*: Their Actions preach contrary to their Sermons, and are too plain Indications of the little serious Credit they give their own Doctrines and Instructions.

A. I hope you do not think that I would Patronize any Mens Vices or Miscarriages: There are too many in all sorts, and where they are in those of the sacred Function they are worst; among whom I cannot deny but there are ill practices; they are subject to the follies and

and passions of other Men. But then I must tell you too, that were they Angels in their conversation, they would be blackned and made vile. For pray consider how many Enemies they have on all sides, that watch for their haltings, and are ready to triumph in any opportunity to expose them. Many hate them for their Function, more for their Conformity: The Romanists on the one hand, and the Sects on the other; Those that have plunder'd the Church, and those that desire to do it; those that have devour'd, and those that take lickerish notice that they have a morsel left. These generally are glad of any failing in a conforming Minister; they

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they lie at catch for such, and when they have got a story, they blow it about with wondrous diligence: So that where there is a small miscarriage they will aggravate it, till they have made it a great wickedness; and when 'tis an heinous offence; they will impute it to the whole Order. And which is worse, there are many wicked lewd slanderers ready to asperse the clearest innocence; and some that make it their business in their debauches to contrive ignominious Tales of Clergy-men, which their Enemies are willing to believe, or at least to propagate, though they do not. Wherefore considering these, and such like unhappy circumstances,

stances, 'tis no wonder if the present Clergy suffer much in their names on this score.

C. But what then, are all the things we heard of lewd and debauch'd Clergy-men false, do you think? and are there not many such vile Persons in Holy Orders?

A. I tell you I acknowledge, and lament that there are so many unworthy Persons crept in among the Clergy? and I wish with all my Soul there could be a remedy found for it. But will you consider how most of them get in; you know most of the Livings of *England* are in Lay-Patronage, and you cannot be ignorant what unworthy ways are now frequently

ly taken in the disposal of them :
what Bonds, Contracts and
Terms are required, which
Honest, Worthy and Ingenious
Men will not comply with, but
those of no Worth or Consci-
ence accept. They bring their
Presentations to the Bishops,
and are able to give an account
of their Learning, as far as the
Law requires (which I have
heard is much less than will ren-
der a Man able and sufficient
according to the expectation of
our Days) They bring us also a
formal Testimonial from those
that likely know little of them,
and the Bishop knows nothing
at all of what they are, less of
what they are like to prove :
But being so qualified, Institu-
tion

tion and Induction cannot be denied by the Law. They get into a cure, and misbehave themselves in it; and then the blame shall lie on the Bishop, and the disgrace spread upon the whole Clergy. And generally I observe that those who so infamously, and dishonestly dispose of the livings in their gift, and by so doing fill the Church with unworthy and incompetent Persons, are the same that clamour about the ill lives of the Clergy, most.

C. But should not these abuses be rectified?

A. I think some good Laws may be wanted to do this: and let me tell you, those that complain might contribute to the reforming

reforming of the miscarriages.

C. How so?

A. By complaining where, and as they ought: As to inform the Bishop when they understand of any Simoniackal contracts; to tell the Minister his fault when they know him peccant, and if after that he persist in his vice, to make publick complaint to the Dioceſan, that his reformation may be attempted by the Censures of the Church; or that upon his contumacious persistence, he may be cast out. If this course was faithfully taken, the evils would be in great part cured. But the misery on't is, many that clamor do not desire *that*, but are rather glad of opportunity to asperse

asperse, and vilifie the Clergy ;
and therefore they complain for
mischief, not for remedy.

C. It may be so with some,
but I assure you 'tis not so with
me. But I think now we have
talkt enough of this subject.

A. I think so too; and 'tis time
for me to be going homewards.

D. Pray let me say somewhat
to you first.

A. I wonder you have been
silent so long, what is it?

D. Is it! It is to tell you that
you have been very bitter in
your Censures of those Godly
Ministers, whose Consciences
will not give them leave to con-
form. And after all you have,
or can say, I must tell you they
are very *powerful* Preachers, and
prevail

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prevail so much, not for I know not what phancies of yours, but because they *Preach Christ*, and *cry down Sin*, which very few of your National Preachers do.

A. I did not consider that you were so hear, else perhaps I might have dealt more gently with your Friends. In what I have said I have spoke plainly as I thought, and as I doubt not, the matter clearly is, as all understanding unprejudiced Men, who have been acquainted with their ways, may see; so that you do me wrong to accuse me of bitterness, as if I had aggravated things beyond the just and due representation of them, which I assure you was all I intended.

They are *Powerful* indeed to
move

move the affections that Ignorance and Enthusiasm, Pride, Singularity and Faction have begot: Those they stir by the same ways by which they were produced; they are powerful on the affections of the senseless inconsidering vulgar, which are mightily transported by blustering and noise, as the Waters are by a Storm, when as soon as the violence is over, they are still as before: But I do not find that they generally move the intelligent and judicious, otherwise, than to beget in them scorn of their egregious follies, and pitty of their fond admirers.

But they *Preach Jesus Christ* you say, which others you think do

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do not: and 'tis true they have the name of Christ almost ever in their mouths, and talk as Men transported with the beauties and excellencies of the Lord *Jesus*: This others do not so much, and therefore Preach not Christ, you phancy; by which you shew how little you understand what you say, notwithstanding you live under their powerful Preaching. For to Preach Christ is to declare and press his Doctrines, Laws, Example, and Sanctions, which I am sure our Ministers (those of them I hear) constantly and earnestly do: and not to doat upon, and to be always impertinently and fulsomly repeating of his name. I cannot deny
I indeed

indeed but that your Men also profess his Doctrines and Laws; but yet 'tis the opinion of some, that many of those Preachers have so darkned these by their Phrases, and so corrupted them by their false and Fanatical conceits, that their Gospel is quite another thing from the Primitive, Apostolical Christianity; and if so, they Preach not *Christ*, but their own *Dreams*. But that is too large a subject for us to discourse now. That I may obtain your favour, I will allow they Preach *Christ* (I wish some do it not out of *Strife* and *Envy*) yet certainly they are not the *only* Men that do it, nor is that fit to be a mark of distinction between them, and our Ministers.

O but

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O but they *Preach down Sin*, you tell us ; and that's powerful Preaching, and by that they affect the Hearts and Consciences of their Hearers. And 'tis true those Teachers cry out against Sin in the *general*, with a great deal of earnestness, declaring what a vile and odious thing Sin is, with wondrous zeal (I cannot say with so much Sense and judgment) but then, they seldom descend to particulars, except in declaiming against the noted Sins of others, and such as they take their Governours in Church and State, and those of opposite judgment to them, to be guilty of: So that their common places of invective, are *Idolatry, Will-worship, Superstition,*

Humane Inventions, Formality, Persecution, hatred of the Godly, and such like (things of which themselves are as guilty as any sort of Men in the World, though they think not so). But for the Sins with which they are generally, and plainly chargeable (those I mention'd before) Malice, Deceit, Disobedience, Pride, Covetousness, Backbiting, Rebellion, Schism, Sacrilege and other such, we seldom hear them declaim against those. I do not remember that in Ten Years, in which I was capable of observing in the late times, that I ever heard one Sermon from any of them, upon either of those subjects.

D. You may talk what you please

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ity, please, but for my part, I shall
dly, hear those Men, because I find
rich I *profit* by them, and I cannot
any by your Parish Minister.

ugh A. That is the continual pre-
the tence for leaving our Churches;
ence when People have nothing else
ble to say. Pray therefore let you
Ma and I debate this matter a little:

ide *You don't profit by our own Minister:*

elli *You do by those other Teachers.*

her As to the *first*, let me ask you;

de whose fault is it that you do not

not profit? Doth not our Minister

in Preach the great Truths, and

fer Duties of the Christian Religi-

ever on? Don't you observe that he

y o picks out the most sutable, use-

sub ful and awakening Subjects?

Doth he not represent the Do-

you trines with plainness and di-

ase I 3 stinctness,

stinctness? Doth he not press the duties with earnestness and affection, doth he not lay down the great motives and encouragements, and give us the true practicable directions to guide us in the performance? (You have heard him often) what say you, can you deny any of this?

D. I have no great fault I confess to find with the Man's Preaching, but yet methinks I am not so much affected with it, nor can I profit by it.

A. It seems you do not profit, but you cannot tell why; therefore give me leave to tell you the reason. First, you have no kindness for the Minister's Person, because he conforms, and
it

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it may be, is not in all things of the same opinion with the Men you admire.

D. Now you mind me of it, I must tell you he is not *Orthodox*, nor sound in his judgment, and that I confess doth beget in me some dislike of him.

A. *Orthodox* is a word by which your Men mean one of their own opinions; and of these they are very fond, and in doating on uncertain points that appertain not to the foundation, they shew themselves very superstitious, and lay ground for eternal Schism, and even for Scepticism, and Atheism it self. For when disputed things are adhered to as certain and necessary, Christian Charity will

be destroyed, and all things at last disputed.

But pray what do you make the measure of Orthodoxy? Are not the belief of and adherence to the Scriptures, the first Fathers and Councils, the old Creeds, and the Articles of the Church of *England* (which in the Doctrines your Men pretend to allow) are not these enough to intitle a Man Orthodox? and all these our Minister teacheth, and professeth.

D. But doth he not hold some Opinions that are contrary to those grounds of Belief?

A. I do not think he doth, and I dare say he thinks he doth not. In extra-essential matters the Pious and the Learned of all sorts

sorts have ever been of different judgments, and are like so to continue to the Worlds end. I have in my time, convers't with Men of all persuasions, and yet scarce ever met any two (though of the same general way and Communion,) that were in all things of the same mind: And therefore if our Minister judgeth otherwise than you or I, or this or that Divine, in some out-points of Theology, it is but as every *thinking* Man else doth: and we that hear him constantly know, that he generally Preacheth the great acknowledg'd Truths, and never troubles his hearers with private Opinions: But zealously and frequently reproveth those that disturb the

World with their particular Phancies, and declares continually against meddling in the Pulpit with unnecessary Controversies and Notions; so that if it were so, that he had private Opinions, you and I need not be concern'd about them.

D. Well! but I have heard him Preach Doctrines I did not like.

A. That may be: But I hope you do not take your liking or disliking to be the standard of Doctrines fit to be Preach'd or not.

D. Nay, I mean Doctrines that were *Erroneous*, which was one reason I left his Ministry.

A. *Erroneous*! as you thought: you would have your judgment to be the measure of truth and falshood.

falsehood. Do you not think you are in some things mistaken?

D. I know I am fallible.

A. And do actually err in many things?

C. It may be so.

A. And yet you stick to all your opinions with that stiffness as if you were infallible: and condemn every one for erroneous that in the least differs from you. This let me tell you, is great pride and immodesty, and renders People very unteachable, when they will not receive or bear any thing but what is just according to their own phancy, and preconceiv'd opinion; nor be taught to understand any thing better than they do already, as if their
knowledg

Knowledge was perfect, and their Minds had no need of information; when as most commonly such presumptuous Persons are very Ignorant, and the Knowledge they pretend, is but a confused heap of vain Imaginations, which they pick'd up by chance, and have no Truth or Coherence in them.

D. Every Man must judge by the best Understanding he hath, and so did I, when I judg'd your Minister to Preach Erroneous Doctrine.

A. And that you say was one reason of your withdrawing from him?

D. Yes.

A. But did you ever go to him to discourse the matter with

with him? Perhaps you mistook his meaning; or it may be he might have made it appear that he was in the right, and you in the wrong.

D. I did not trouble my self to do that.

A. And yet you withdrew from his Ministry upon it?

D. I did.

A. Then let me tell you, you did a very rash, uncharitable, unchristian action. We are not, you know, to separate from the conversation of any private Person till we have told him his fault between us and him, though the fault be plain and apparent: much less may we divide from the Church and our Ministers, till we have made the

the matter of offence known ; much less may we do it when the fault is not evident , and certain. It is no small matter to change the Guide that God's providence , and our Governours have set over us, and to take others contrary to the Laws under which we live ; 'tis a thing that before a Man doth it he should consider well, for here is at least the *appearance* of danger. 'Tis *something* to break Laws and disturb Governours, and trouble Ministers, and offend private Christians ; 'tis *something*, I say, which a tender Conscience would not do, without great consideration, and without being fully resolv'd in the necessity of it : and how then

then durst you do it, upon a mislike of your Minister's Doctrine, when you never did your self or him that right, as to speak with him about it? and to enquire what satisfaction he could give you in it. This let me tell you plainly, is an error greater than any you can pretend in his Doctrines, it is a Sin that hath a Complication of many others, *Pride and Stomach, Self-will, Contempt* of your betters, and causeless *Disobedience* to your Governours. You have now *chosen* ways and teachers upon your own head, and if you happen to be mistaken in your choice (as I much fear you are) this confident proceeding and bold relying on your own understanding,

ding, will render your Sin and Folly inexcusable.

D. I perceive you grow angry. Fare you well.

A. Nay, pray stay a little, I am not so much angry as griev'd at your ways: and have a question more to ask you on occasion of what you have told me; and that is, Whether you are to leave every Minister and Church, as soon as any thing is said that is really Erroneous, in the lesser and unessential matters?

D. Should we not love the Truth and fly from Errors? I think we ought to settle where the greatest purity is both in Doctrine and Worship.

A. And upon these terms we shall

shall never settle any where at all. For no Church pretends it self to be infallible, but the *Roman*: and there are no particular Men or Body of Men, but have their actual Errors and Mistakes. So that according to this way of proceeding you must have departed from the Preaching and Communion of the holiest Men, and best Churches of the most ancient, yea and of all times. In many things we err, as well as offend all.

I have thus spoken to you freely in this matter, I hope you will consider it. But I have a little more to say of your *not profiting* under our Minister: I am yet speaking to the *first* cause;

cause, your prejudice against his Person, which in a manner you confess: Where this is, the Doctrine will not be heeded, be it what it will; and I have plainly observed this effect in you, when I have seen you at Church sometimes at Funeral Sermons, or other occasions.

D. What have you observed?

A. I have taken notice, that though the Minister hath been speaking of the greatest matters, in the most pathetical and moving way, yet you have looked coldly, insensibly, and unconcernedly upon it: whereas I remember when the Men you now follow, Preach'd in publick, you used to listen with

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a very visible and affectionate attention to all, even the poor, mean, impertinent, and sometimes senseless things, they deliver'd; and to be very diligent in penning those Sermons; when as these you manifestly slight by your carriage, even when they are full of the weightiest, and most useful truths. And is not this to have the Faith of Christ with *respect of Persons*? And to come under St. Jude's Character of the Separatists of his time, who had *Mens persons in admiration*? This is not to honour Ministers for their works sake, but to undervalue and slight their work for theirs; whereas a Christian should joyfully hear Christ's Truths

Truths and Laws, and affectionately imbrace them for their own sake, and his.

D. This I do for all your observations, and so I hope you have done with me.

A. No, I have more causes yet to shew of your *nor profiting* under our Minister: you told me he delivered Doctrines sometimes that you did not like: He presseth the duties of *Peaceableness, Modesty of Judgment, Candor, Subjection to Governors, Charity, &c.* And reproves the contrary vices, and these are very proper, and reasonable subjects for the needs of the Age: But such Doctrines you do not *like*, your Party is wont to call the most modest
and

and necessary representation of these matters, *railing*, and reflecting on the Godly. So that those duties, and their contrary Sins must not be touch'd lest you wound the *good People*. No; Preach up the comfortable Doctrines of God's *seeing no sin in his chosen*, Salvation by *Faith without Works*, and the *Righteousness of Christ covering our Sins*, (in the *Antinomian* Sense). *Liberty of Conscience*, the *Privileges of the Saints*, the *marks of Regeneration* that comprehend the *Party*, and exclude all else: the *abominations of the Wicked*, that are for the *Common Prayer*, and *Bishops*. O these are edifying, Soul-refreshing Doctrines, these you like, because they flatter you

you in your ways: Those that Preach thus, shall have your Company, your Ears, your Hearts, and your Purfes; when as such as Preach the sound, searching Doctrine, you cannot endure: you vilifie their Persons, and are prejudiced against their Preaching, and be it never so powerful and profitable, you *can learn nothing* from it, because you *will not*. Here's the bottom of your phancied profiting by your own Preachers, and not by ours. But if a Man should ask you in what Principles of Religion you are better instructed, what duties you are excited to, and directed in, that you could not learn from our Ministers; I believe you would be able to
give

give but a slender account of your profiting in those things, in which the true proficiency of a Christian doth consist. But your profiting is your being gratified, pleased, and encouraged in the way of opposition, and separation you are in.

D. I cannot endure to hear your wicked and prophane discourse, and therefore once more, fare you well.

A. I know every thing is prophane in your account that doth not favour your Phantastical and Schismatical ways. If you are angry at my honest freedom I must bear it as well as I can, and so, Your Servant.

E. He'l do your errand to the Brotherhood, and publish
you

you for a very carnal wicked Man.

A. That's their usual way of answering when they are roundly opposed, and of reforming when they are seriously reprov'd. I value the favour of any Wise and Good Man, but for theirs I heed it not.

E. He speaks bitterly against our Ministers, when he is in company where he can talk at liberty. His common Accusation of them is that they Preach for hire.

A. It is fit that he that Preacheth the Gospel should live by it. And the Justice and Piety of our Ancestors have made some provision for them in most places, settled by our most

most Fundamental Laws; and what they have out of any Man's Estate on that account, is as much *theirs*, as the remaining part is *his*. Here is the mistake of Men that talk thus, They reckon that all they possess is their own, in which account they are much out: all is their own when their debts are paid; when they have paid to God the *things that are Gods*, and to *Cæsar* the *things that are Cæsar's*; what the Laws have ordained to be paid out of their Estates to others, is *their* property, and no Man can be called an hireling for taking what is his own: Nor can Ministers be any more justly called so for receiving the maintenance the ancient Laws

and Government have allowed them, than Kings for taking Taxes, and other Payments from their Subjects.

E Ministers have much to do with such People: and many that in words pretend they love the Church are as troublesome as those. Such as neglect the publick worship, and never come to it, but when they have nothing else to do; now and then you shall see them drop into the Church by chance, but in their very coming in they shew how little concerned they are, and their whole carriage after declares their carelesness, and indifferency to those things. So that if the Minister particularly court and caress them with-

without taking notice of their indevotion, and other Sins, he may chance to have their good word a little while: but if he do not so, they be ready on all occasions, and without any, to carp at him; if he omits any of the least circumstances of his duty (or they phancy so) he shall be sure to hear of their railing, and backbiting of him; when as the most constant, laborious, and worthy diligence in the work of his Ministry, and the most laudable performance of all Offices publick and private, shall not gain him any jot of interest or favour with them, nor as much as their good word. The ground of which is because the things he admi-

nisters to them are not at all valued, and have no hold upon their affections.

A. Perhaps they may like to hear him Preach a little, while he is new among them: but when he hath resided any time, he grows stale, and cannot affect them with his Preaching, though constant exercise hath never so much improved him in that faculty.

E. And 'tis another discouragement to learned and able Ministers that after all their teaching, People have so little Sense and Understanding of Divine matters, as to be most of all taken with the weakest, and most trifling of those Men, that now and then happen to supply
their

their room. I have heard some of them say that they are extremely glad when their Auditors happen to be pleased with any true and substantial Preacher; but to hear of their admiring and applauding those that they, and other judicious Men, were ashamed to hear; this shews their little proficiency, and cannot but be matter of trouble to their Ministers.

A. And no doubt it is so; not out of envy to those poor retailers of small wares; but of pity to their follies, and the Peoples want of understanding and judgment; it would trouble any Man to see that he hath so far lost his labour, in all his diligent endeavours to instruct

K 3] them;

them; to find that they generally feel not any thing of substantial, practical, awakening truth, but will sit stupid, and dead under such; when they are pleased, and transported with weak, affected, superficial stuff, that hath no Sense, Understanding, or Life in it. But it grows late we may have some other opportunity to discourse these matters.

E. Pray before we part let me have a word or two more with you. You have been asserting and commending *Plain Preaching*, and you seem to make *Plainness* the general Character of all good Sermons: But will not this disoblige the Ministers from taking pains about them? would it not expose their Preaching to the disrespect,

respect, if not contempt of the People? Will they not think they can Preach themselves, if it be so plain a business? And will not the Ministerial office be hereby render'd liable to be usurp'd by every one that judgeth he has abilities for plain instruction?

A. I perceive you have not taken sufficient notice of what has been said in describing plain Preaching; I do not mean by it, what is slight and vulgar, what is unthought, unconsider'd; but what is unstrain'd, unaffected; what is manly, and solid; and so to speak requires Learning and Study, and improved faculties. This should be the end of a wise Man's pains to conceive things clearly, and to express them

them plainly. It asks much less of parts and abilities to talk mystically in phrases, and hard words, and terms of art (which many admire, because they do not understand) than it doth to speak properly, and intelligibly; which, though it may seem very easie to be done, yet indeed it requires most labour, and 'tis mastery to have gain'd this ability. A Man doth not shew his Wit or Learning, by rolling in Metaphors, and scattering his Sentences of Greek and Latin, by abounding in high expressions, and talking in the Clouds, but he is then learned, when his learning has clear'd his Understanding, and furnish'd it with full and distinct apprehen-

apprehensions of things; when it enables him to make *hard* things *plain*; and conceptions, that were *confused*, *distinct*, and *orderly*; and he shews his learning by speaking good strong and plain Sense. So that you see there is no fear of making Learning unnecessary to good Preaching; there is no fear of excusing Ministers from taking pains; there is no fear of exposing the office by the plainness I have commended: and for your objection that this will lay it open to intrusions, besides the answer contain'd in what I have said already, I say further, that the Ministers function is, blessed be God, secured from such invasions by the discipline, order, and

and government of the Church according to the primitive Apostolical pattern, and rules, and not by the Clergies having the only abilities to instruct; I doubt not but there are many pious and knowing Laymen, whose parts and knowledg would enable them for publick teaching: but they have no Authority so to do; and therefore 'twould be a great sin, and folly for them to attempt it. Every Man may not do every thing that he can; there is a *poli-
tick* as well as *natural* capacity; the Laws of Government are to be consider'd, and observ'd, and according to them, the abilities of Men ought to be imployed, or restrain'd.

E. You have satisfied me as to
that

concerning Preaching. I I I

that matter, but your plain Preachers do not take so much pains as exact Preaching would require; for I understand that some of them Preach *Extempore*.

A. I know indeed some that Preach *without writing*; but their Preaching is not therefore *Extempore*; *Extempore* is *unthought*, not *unwritten*: and these do not vent unconsider'd, unpremeditated instructions. No, those I plead for prepare themselves by previous studies of the Sciences, and Divinity; after which with much anxiety and thoughtfulness they settle clear, and coherent conceptions in their minds, of the Christian Doctrines, encouragements, and rules of Life; they have exercised themselves long in laborious

laborious Preaching, and it may be thence have gain'd the ability of ready, and easie expression; they frame the Scheme of every particular Sermon, and lodge it distinctly in their minds; yea they lay the train of the whole inlargement, and settle the consequence of each thing to another, under every head; though they give themselves not the trouble of writing and forming all into set words. And if any will condemn this for *Extempore* Preaching, I think they are very unjust in their Censure. 6 MA 50

E. If it be so, I shall not make one of those Censurers; nor at present give you further Diversion from your occasions.

A. Therefore, Good Night.

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